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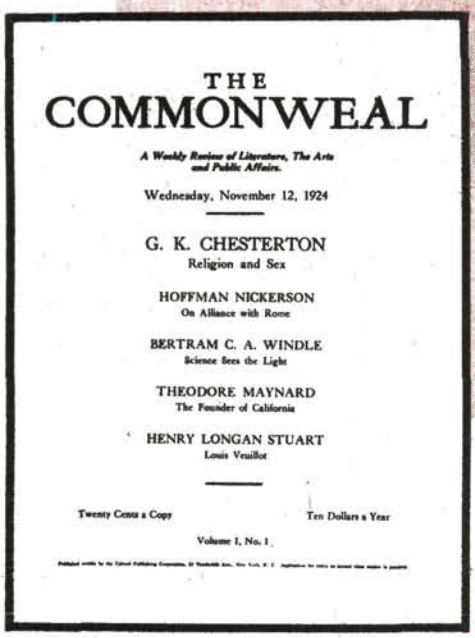

THE
COMMONWEAL

A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts and Public Affairs.

Wednesday, November 12, 1924

G. K. CHESTERTON
Religion and Sex

HOFFMAN NICKERSON
On Alliance with Rome

BERTRAM C. A. WINDLE
Science Sees the Light

THEODORE MAYNARD
The Founder of California

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DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

The dilemma of an anti-abortion Democrat

M. Basil Pennington *on Haiti* **Abigail McCarthy** *on the persistence of women religious* **Jim Sleeper** *on 'neoliberals'* **George Kilcourse** *on Thomas Merton, & poems by* **Anne Porter**

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Correspondence

Humanity, si; work, no

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: What a deal of nonsense has been written in praise of work since Adam delved and Eve span, most of it by professional gentlemen. Now we have in your lead editorial of September 9 yet one more unthinking contribution to the paean.

Bishop Hurley is talking through his miter when he proclaims that "work is of supreme importance, precisely because it is through labor that human beings realize their humanity." Cutting through the gob, is the underpaid teenager bagging burgers realizing his humanity, the bored bank teller, the black-lunged coal miner hacking at the coal face, the red-eyed nit-picker on the assembly line, the licensed usurer, the prison executioner? The limitations of their humanity, yes; but I do not think Bishop Hurley was essaying irony.

What most of us want is not work per se, but the lolly it brings and enough of that to secure us not a bare existence on the fringes of society, but a full participation in it. This we should have in or out of work. This they already have in West Germany and Scandinavia. But as always here we lag—bemused by Wild West dreams of frontier self-reliance.

Little of the world's work, not freely chosen, is worth doing, less than that is necessary. Bring on the robots! The unemployed in great numbers must and indeed should always be with us now. They need not be a problem except for the greedy who would not share with them.

The gaunt, unsmiling, fig-leafed figure of Work should be removed from its pedestal and replaced by something lovelier—or not replaced at all, left vacant, a resting place for the happy idle.

CLAUDIA FLETCHER

Forming a public

Hempstead, N.Y.

To the Editors: Superintendent Arricale's brief essay ("Let's Admit What We Want from the Schools," Sept. 9) is a thoughtful and useful comment. But, like all such efforts, all but hopeless.

John Dewey (does anyone ever read him any more?) devoted much thoughtful analysis to the concept of the public—those taxpayers and others who impose upon the schools all the things they intuitively know their children need, but are unable to find this assistance from other sources to supply. It is this amorphous aggregate, not the "educational octopuses" that have overburdened the schools with tasks for which it has never been able to prepare itself. But, he argued, a public does not exist in the nature of things. It must be formed, brought into existence through the development of common concerns, common values, common goals, and a common knowledge. Within this development education is one, though a leading element of preoccupation. We have long been derided for construing education as the primary means of creating social order, but the fact is that in its intrinsic concern to nurture intelligence in the young, it can do nothing better than to fill this intrinsic task.

It is hopeless to demand of a disorganized, badly fragmented public that it acknowledge what it has never learned to acknowledge. I have written extensively on the impossible tasks imposed upon our modern schools, and it probably has been as fruitless as Mr. Arricale's essay will be. Contra the Barzuns in the universities and on the school boards, Dewey's struggles against the elitist tendencies in every level of education were directed toward making the schools themselves take on the responsibilities for developing a public which our political structures have only dispersed into special interest groupings. And recent trends in education are mindlessly going in that same bleak direction, with its concerns for stars and extra pay and rigid infrastructures.

What we want from the schools, it seems to me, is a revival of that spirit that made it a unique American contribution in the world of learning, by allowing, encouraging, every child to strive for new developments, free from the anterior limitations of a rigid social structure—an educational system which instructs parents in their roles as it instructs children to reach greater levels of personal development. If every child must now learn to use computers, what of the parents who don't know the first thing about their functions and their uses? If children's health must be cared for, what about teaching parents what is really required for such care? Such a public might then petition government to supply those requirements, and leave the school to perform its primary function—the nurture of intelligence.

MARC BELTH

Professor Emeritus, Philosophy of Education, Queens College, C.U.N.Y.

Topic for bishops

Scarsdale, N.Y.

To the Editors: Thank you for publishing John Coleman's article "The Christian as Citizen" [Sept. 9]. It was very thought-provoking and brought home, to me at least, the need for a thorough exposition and study of what Christian citizenship means today.

It strikes me that this would be an excellent topic for our American bishops to address in a pastoral letter. War and peace, the question of nuclear weapons, deterrence, the economy, and the other topics that the bishops have addressed or that they plan to write about are certainly all worthy topics. But I believe that they would be doing American Catholics a tremendous service by delineating clearly and concisely the ideal of citizenship in the modern world.

Perhaps one or more of your most reverend readers will bring just such an

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GRENADA'S GAIN, OUR LOSS

NOWHERE IN the world are people so pleased with the American invasion of Grenada as in Grenada itself. Under the circumstances, some of the Grenadian enthusiasm should be taken with a grain of salt. Still, the reaction has been so widespread that critics of the invasion cannot ignore it. It sets the Grenada action apart from other recent Great Power interventions. In Afghanistan, for example, and in Nicaragua, the populations have hardly welcomed their "liberators." But the Grenadians' contentment is far from a conclusive answer to the disturbing questions this invasion raises. Indeed, if Grenadians are happier about what has happened than even the victorious Americans, the reason is not hard to uncover. Despite the loss of life and the material destruction, a hundred thousand Grenadians may be more secure as a result of this military action. The rest of the world, and the U.S. in particular, is not.

Invading another country is not a small matter; even invading a small country is not a small matter. America's action has reinforced the pattern of quick military strikes, meant to confront objecting nations with *faits accomplis*, that buys success at the price of putting the world on hair trigger. The invasion twisted international law into a pretzel and undermined the U.S.'s own invocations of the principle of nonintervention. International law, full of loopholes as it is and frequently honored in the breech, is not absolute, nor is the principle of nonintervention. Nonetheless, peace and our own security remain served by the taint that still attaches, despite all the resigned or cynical concessions to power politics, to nations wielding military might without sufficient cause. Such cause was not present in the case of Grenada.

Grenada was ruled by an increasingly bizarre and fratricidal group of Marxists. Like many third-world governments, including the one they succeeded, they were a burden on their own people. Their thuggishness, however, was scarcely in the same league with that of some of the thugs Washington has chosen to generously aid and abet in the same region. If throwing out thugs were our concern, then the Rangers and Marines ought to be heading toward Haiti or Guatemala, or perhaps even El Salvador where American embassy officials have identified the Constituent Assembly's security chief and other ranking government officials as directing and financing death squads which have assassinated thousands of Salvadorans. The evidence that the Grenadian hardliners were threatening American medical students has never emerged; what has emerged instead is considerable evidence that the Grenadians were assuring the Americans' safety and that obstacles to the students' evacuation came not from Grenada but from other Caribbean states already involved in the invasion plans. All this was apparently known and conveniently ignored by Washington. It wanted this invasion.

So did the other Eastern Caribbean states. The evidence so far come to light does *not* show that Grenada was on the verge of becoming "a Soviet-Cuban colony" and

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"major military bastion," as Mr. Reagan declared. The evidence does show a sizable arms buildup, not of the variety threatening to the U.S., but sufficient either to cow the home population, create fear or mischief in nearby islands, or supply other revolutionary forces in the area. Grenada's neighbors had cause for concern. But the situation was complex enough — even the head of the Caribbean contingent in the invading forces expressed doubts about the threat posed by Grenadian arms — that alternatives to a preemptive strike against a still potential danger should have been pursued. Only the insistently promoted notion of danger to the American students rationalized the demand for nothing less than an invasion, and an invasion now.

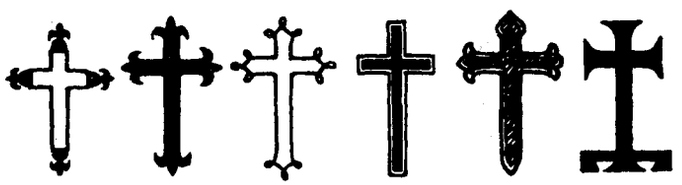
Around the world the American action has been compared to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a comparison that made President Reagan bristle, with some justification. The Soviet invasion was on an entirely different scale and has been brutally pursued against determined national resistance. But with these important differences noted (and they have been noted by some critics of the invasion, for instance in *Le Monde*), at least one frightening parallel remains between America's neat, little exercise in intervention and the Soviets' big, messy ones. Both superpowers are determined to maintain veto power over any change of regime in their self-defined spheres of influence; and not being able to justify this by any accepted standards of international conduct, they resort to the most transparent falsifications. Moscow announces itself "invited" into Afghanistan, denounces Solidarity as a tool of the CIA in Poland, and blows up very real failings of the West into propaganda specters. Now Washington, in the same spirit that has characterized its whole Central American policy, plays the same game. Grenada's airport had been closed — *false*. "Intelligence reports" indicated Grenadian plans to take hostages — *later denied*. The students were in danger — *the med school chancellor was called by the U.S. ambassador and begged to endorse this, which he did not*. The recent coup in Grenada reflected a Cuban-Soviet design — *no evidence, and Cuba denounced the killing of Maurice Bishop*. At least 1,100 "well-trained, professional" Cuban soldiers were on Grenada disguised as construction workers — *Havana's figure of 784 turned out to be about right, and most were in truth construction workers*. The U.S. acted only on the basis of an invitation and an Eastern Caribbean treaty — *some evidence points to U.S. prompting and the treaty, which we didn't sign, was irrelevant and in conflict with treaties we did sign*. One hundred bodies of victims of Grenadian extremists were found in a mass grave — *admitted untrue*. Euphemisms were invented — this was a "rescue," not an invasion. The press was excluded — for its own good, of course. And all this amidst evocations of national security and the sacrifices of American servicemen.

Confusion and error accompany any military action, but something more was involved here: an energetic campaign to plaster one alibi after another over an action that the administration had undertaken for a reason it could not publicly defend, to display its willingness to counter pro-Soviet governments with military might. Students of totalitarianism describe its atmosphere of falsehood, where deception no longer deceives but simply becomes part of a debasing language everyone is forced to speak. Not since the days of Vietnam has America been given such a strong dose of that climate. The cynicism it nurtures has already been manifested in a number of "tough-minded" celebrations of the invasion, and eventually that cynicism will flower among the invasion's critics as well, here and abroad. There will be much to pay for our great victory in Grenada, and in parts of the world of far greater importance. Yet the greatest loss may be at home. In invading Grenada, we have invaded ourselves — with mendacity and sham.

LUTHER'S LEGACY

Born one-half millennium ago this November 10, Martin Luther's words still ring out as if spoken yesterday. Their astonishing novelty in his own time is lost on us precisely because he brought into being so much of the world we live in. "This is the plainest truth . . . Who can receive or accept, on another's behalf, the promises of God, which requires faith from each one individually? Can I give the promises of God to another, even if he be an unbeliever? Or can I believe on the behalf of another, or cause another to believe?" These words come from a treatise on the Eucharist. Of which the late Gregory Bateson was fond of saying, especially to assembled scientists, that these Reformation debates on symbolism represented the last time in Western history that the issues *were* worth burning a person at the stake!

In Luther, our restless molecular systems found a catalyst for that chemical chain reaction we call the modern West. For we still live within the story of the self with which Luther wrestled. Where Dante's purgatory was a seven-story climb *after death*, Luther's focus was this-worldly; he transformed hell, purgatory, and heaven into the despair, uncertainty, and precarious faith of the newly assertive self of a burgeoning bourgeois civilization. The themes he articulated—the deadliness of self-justifying "works," the unresolvable ambiguity of faith, the hiddenness of God for the well-lighted, rational self, and the implications of Christian freedom ("free lord of all, subject to none . . . dutiful servant of all, subject to all") for peasant consciousness-raising and insurgency—all these remain on our agenda, as disturbing for us as they were for Luther. And as unfinished—for truthfully Luther is not a model of, or for, the settled mind. He is rather a figure whose very conflicts and splits display our own, a man whose passionate quest for the truth denote him as one who wrestled, as we must, with a complex process that resists all closure. It is not just his assuring faith in the midst of complication that



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claims our attention, but even, if not especially, his mistakes.

Take his troublesome political theology, for instance, enough to bring a smile to any Metternich or Henry Kissinger: "Man is divided into two kingdoms. In one he acts by his own will and counsel, without the precepts and mandates of God, namely in things inferior to him." Current ecological policy and geopolitics still submit, in too large a measure, to Luther's separation of worldly affairs from the things of God.

With Luther, indeed, the Christ-story began to be told in a new way, as the story of a self. It was as if Christ were everyone who has lost the securities of tribal solidarity and fallen into the exposed anguish and responsibilities of the emerging autonomous self—who must work out his or her salvation in fear and trembling, alone. Telling the story this way hasn't worked out. By the nineteenth century, the solitary existentialist believer looked more like a permanently afflicted Job than Jesus triumphant over death, and for many Jesus himself became just another abandoned sufferer indistinguishable from Job. The history of modern religious thought, rather than justifying God's ways towards humankind, has consisted largely of taking Job's part and protesting the inscrutable ways of God. This too is part of Luther's legacy.

'Neoliberal Conference'

A CLASS ACT

TOO FAR FROM PITTSBURGH

IF THE would-be "neoliberal" movement has an Achilles heel, it is an over-reliance on the honor and perspicacity of a few upper-middle-class young men (and a very few women) who think they can regenerate an ethic of social responsibility in America by persuasion and bright ideas. Among the three hundred writers, academics, consultants, congressional staffers, politicians, and entrepreneurs attending the *Washington Monthly*'s "Neoliberal Conference" in Reston, Virginia, last month, there was an élan embarrassingly yet irrepressibly redolent of John Kennedy's best and brightest. Or maybe of the late night bull-session where undergrads press their notions of social reform.

Except for a few gritty liberals like Senator Tom Eagleton, who told the assembled neoliberals off, the conference-goers exuded an almost virginal innocence of American history's massive, often crude struggles for labor and civil rights, waged by movements of people whom the economy and the culture had rendered otherwise powerless despite the passionate good intentions of earlier generations of reformers. The neoliberals seemed strangers to Reinhold Niebuhr's observation that the astute social pedagogy of middle-class reformers is almost always swamped by the self-interested behavior of the rest of *their own class* (what else is Reaganomics?) as much as by the festival of greed and delinquency whose rumblings some conference participants detected among working stiffs and the poor.

Monthly editor Charles Peters opened the conference with his "Neoliberal Manifesto," a preachy, down-home, populist appeal to transcend the politics of selfishness, whose chief perpetrators would seem to be entrenched liberal interest groups and not the underlying power relationships in a world of large-scale capitalism, relationships which have incited, shaped, and limited those liberal interests. Panels on health, law and the courts, values, entitlements, national security, and economic growth similarly sweated the symptoms, not the system.

Since civil rights gains, for example, have become mired in litigious acrimony (litigation "makes people feel and act ugly," one of the panelists put it, because it overstates their malevolence), we should look to economic growth to foster social justice, and hold the line against the expansion of legal services to the poor. Of course, they insisted, we should also curb the over-lawyering of the rich. But guess whose sacrifice of legal assistance is really the more likely?

Since elite labor unions have become stodgy and exclusive, blocking innovation and grabbing too much of the pie from other workers, we should temper their excesses with pay cuts and give-backs to allow management greater flexibility in restoring growth and creating more jobs. Of course, management will take symbolic pay cuts, too, and some executives like Donald Burr, who told the conference about the phenomenal growth of his non-union, "worker-owned" People's Express airline, will reward flexibility and innovation among employees. But will neoliberals seek curbs on multi-billion dollar advertising which tells the worker he's a chump for not consuming more with his smaller paycheck? And do they really think labor concessions can carry us closer to the full employment which is the only long-range solvent of crime, dependency, and labor defensiveness itself? Can Western capitalism really end unemployment through labor discipline? Or is the nature of corporate investment, distorted by a variety of factors including what Robert Reich calls the "paper entrepreneurialism" of mergers, more to blame? The conference never addressed these systemic issues.

A pity, since serious analysis would suggest that unemployment, not welfare as such, induces dependency and passivity. Yet too many conference-goers saw entitlements as a cause, not a symptom, of pathology. The writer Ken Auletta had to remind overzealous neoliberals that lots of teenage mothers have their babies not because of welfare but in order to claim the man, or escape a violent home, or simply because they didn't know enough about birth control. It's hard to see how curbing welfare would affect this behavior, which reflects a range of experiences from cultural dismemberment to the grinding poverty of chronic unemployment itself.

Similarly, feminist excesses, from separatism to power-hungry corporate ladder-climbing, were treated as self-generated evils to be curbed, not as symptoms of a deeper powerlessness in so many traditional relations. Of forty-seven panelists at the conference, four were women, and three of

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these discussed the virtues of motherhood, voluntarism, and traditional religious education—all valuable in their own right, but perhaps not as answers to feminist "excess." Deborah Fallows, who's writing a book about motherhood, told the audience almost testily, "Let me rave about children for a few minutes." She ventured that women with young children who insist on working when they don't have to are copping out on their real responsibility to stay home.

Neoliberals did bite the bullet on the draft, James Fallows arguing that it must be reinstated out of fairness and as a corrective to affluent liberals' disdain of tough military and foreign policy questions. For better or worse, he noted, America's worldwide commitments preclude the traditional "peacetime" dismantling of large armies; forcing everyone to share the sacrifice will increase critical participation in the formulation of those commitments. Will it? Or will a peacetime draft socialize and militarize us into accepting those commitments as they've already been defined for us, our sacrifices themselves conferring new legitimacy upon them? In the end, I think fairness mandates a draft, but these other questions remain—and remained unexplored at the conference, which also never focused on America's commitment to nuclear weaponry.

In the end, the neoliberals' attraction to symptomology may prove fatal. If we've transcended selfishness in the past, it's because the exploited got together in movements whose impolite, sheer force wrested from our political economy such minimal decencies as health care and education, along with the disposable income which ironically saved capitalism from itself. So doing, those movements encountered and faced down remarkably brutal counterforces which seem to have been expunged, as if by a censor, from neoliberal history books. The latter begin with the "We Do Our Part" voluntarism of the NRA, invoked by Peters, and they discover our finest hour in the Peace Corps, cited often if with some critical hindsight by its many alumni at the conference. Against the roseate glow of such nostalgia, no wonder the excesses of unions and affirmative action seem mean-spirited encroachments rather than defensive and admittedly often self-defeating reactions to deeper systemic meanness.

Neoliberals have been rubbing their noses against the institutional encrustations which have formed at the high water marks of the great social movements—the overregulation, litigiousness, featherbedding, and questionable entitlements. They are right in calling attention to these encrustations and to their stifling hold on the Democratic party's policies and performance. But they forget that genuine social and economic gains have sometimes congealed into cumbersome abuses because the social movements that won them, once vibrant with community and sanctified by enormous bravery, were stymied by entrenched resistance, and so began to jockey for position defensively, reactively, within constraints they'd modified but not fundamentally altered. "Your greatest stumbling block as neoliberals is the labor unions," the neoconservative writer Irving Kristol told the conference; "we neoconservatives have the corporations, but they're less a problem because their leaders are so apolitical." Neoliberals are easily disarmed by such nonsense because, for all their celebration of the unencumbered entrepreneur who cuts his workers into the deal, they accept as fundamentally benign the givens of corporate life, so firmly entrenched in our society that executives can afford to be "apolitical." When those givens are challenged, we find the captains of industry becoming very political, indeed.

Without quite knowing it, neoliberals are doing the corporations' fence-keeping. That closes them to the truth that the liberal status quo they pretend to attack needs more than their tinkering with new curbs and policy instruments, and more than middle-class appeals for a new voluntarism and faith. It needs something they can't provide, a reinfusion of the economic and political democracy which dissident new unions and new movements for social justice will have to embody.

To say that the cure for the problems of democracy is more democracy isn't sentimental. It's a simple statement of the conditions without which neoliberalism will remain a middle-class bubble on the surface of national history. As a movement, neoliberalism will go everywhere and nowhere: everywhere, in the sense that any new middle-class idea is buzzed about by the media (the conference was covered widely if superficially) and is mouthed by politicians running for election; nowhere, in the sense that we will be left with a handful of valuable reforms which lack the potency to check the pathologies of greed and war exacerbated by corporate-dominated priorities.

JIM SLEEPER

(Jim Sleeper is a free-lancer who writes regularly for Dissent, *the* Village Voice, *and other publications.)*

Washington report

OUT OF COMMISSION, II

TRYING TO ELIMINATE PARTY POLITICS

AS THE VOTES were being recorded and flashing above the House floor, the din was getting louder and louder. The names of established Democratic liberals and nuclear freeze advocates were being lit on the electronic voting screen—in support of the Snowcroft Commissions recommendations and the MX. The final victory tally—with the help of ninety-one Democrats—could hardly be heard above the gavel-pounding and the House floor and galleries erupting excitedly. Amid all this reverberating sound and fury, energetic MX opponent Rep. Tony Coelho, chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee, remained pensive: "It raises questions about where we are as a party."

Other Democrats have also raised questions. They have

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observed how the Social Security Commission allowed significant changes in Social Security on the House floor; they have watched prominent Democrats line themselves behind the bipartisan banner of the Commission on Central America; they see valuable campaign issues going up in smoke. After the announcement of the Central American Commission's membership, Sen. Chris Dodd, Connecticut Democrat, lamented that "we can end up, as we did with the MX, pulling the administration's chestnuts out of the fire." "The Reagan policy is not popular," said Dodd, who sees the bipartisan approach as "nothing more than another attempt to defuse congressional and public opposition."

But many Democrats fear Republican charges of having "lost" Central America or are lured by the possibility of administration support for a Marshall Plan for the region.

Pundits have duly noted that when in doubt Americans tend to fall back upon commissions with "Marshall Plans." But as one recalls in the case of the frequently proposed "Marshall Plan for the cities," rarely are such schemes carried into effect. Concern over the Central American Commission, as voiced by Senator Dodd, reflects the criticism of study commissions in general—too frequently they are created to evade issues and to delay or even totally avoid taking any action.

When Kenneth Clark was a member of the Kerner Commission, he read the reports of earlier investigations of the 1919 Chicago riot, the Harlem riots of 1935 and of 1943, and the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. Clark ended up declaring; "It is a kind of Alice in Wonderland—with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction."

Many observers of the use of commissions as a policy vehicle contend that their record has been more encouraging if seen in terms of incremental, long-term change. Senator Jackson seems to have had that perspective as he expressed to reporters his aspirations for his proposed Central American Commission: "What we need is a policy that has a thirty-fifty-year vision of building democracy, increasing economic opportunity, and reinforcing human rights for the peoples of Central America." He also told reporters that he felt "this issue transcends politics."

This comment was echoed in an earlier call, by Joseph C. Harsch of the *Christian Science Monitor*, for a commission study of the region. He cited the success of the Social Security Commission as a case where Washington was "willing to put partisanship aside and forgo political advantage," further noting that "the president and Democratic leaders in Congress came to realize that the subject was much too serious for politics." Harsch concluded, "Mr. Reagan, I submit, needs another national commission to *depoliticize* U.S. policy toward Latin America [emphasis added]." Cord Meyer of the *Washington Times* saw a commission as an opportunity "to lift the complex Central American dilemma out of the crossfire of partisan politics and would allow our best informed minds to concentrate on what is necessary over the long haul. . . ."

These justifications for a commission appear to separate policy-formation from politics. "To lift out of," or "too serious for," or "transcends" politics—these are phrases that reflect, at least in part, a growing tendency to relegate politics solely to the winning of elections. The development of policy is to be left to the experts "above" politics. *Who* carries policy out is being divorced from *what* is carried out.

What happens to issues when they become "depoliticized" and are approached in a bipartisan manner? Well, in the case of the Social Security Commission, major participants came to agreement on the "facts"—acknowledged to be an artifice, but at least one upon which an accord could be reached and recommended. Placing the policy responsibility under the umbrella of a bipartisan commission also allowed significant other changes to be made on the House floor, such as raising the retirement age, which would otherwise not have been feasible without the "political," that is, electoral, protection the bipartisan commission afforded.

Hence, one can see the conflicting motivations in the calls for bipartisan commissions on the deficit and Medicare. Many Democrats don't want to see more potentially valuable campaign issues being offered up to the goddess of bipartisanship for blessings promised in the future. Opposition to commissions on the deficit and Medicare also comes from those members of Congress who sit on the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees. They resent "end runs" around their committees, which have primary jurisdiction. Yet part of the problem is that no single committee jurisdiction encompasses all the major components of the issues on which commissions have already been formed. The jurisdictions of the taxing committees do not comprehensively cover either the deficit (taxing *and* spending) or Medicare (e.g., control of health care costs). That may be why a leading proponent of a Medicare commission is Commerce Health Subcommittee chairman Rep. Henry Waxman of California.

A comparable jurisdiction problem exists down the street in the executive branch, even in the case of Social Security, strange as it may seem initially. Overlapping and conflicting jurisdictions among departments, agencies, and the White House raise considerable obstacles to any administration's attempt to formulate foreign and domestic policy.

Another ingredient in the present policy smorgasbord, and its importance to the menus of the political parties, is that the House is controlled by one party and the Senate by the other.

CORRECTION: Final-minute rush at the printer resulted in the loss of several lines at the end of last issue's editorial "In the Mail." The closing sentence should have read: "But mostly there is a universe of human suffering and human hope — on the one hand, the victims of drought and war and governmental folly; on the other hand, the bleeding hearts, the handwringers, the little old ladies (and generals) in tennis shoes, the ambitious politicians, the dedicated ideologues, the untiring comforters and seekers of justice — all represented in this daily manila folder."

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The last time that this occurred was in the second half of the Hoover administration. A president quite attached to commissions, Hoover appointed sixty commissions, boards, and similar bodies in the first sixteen months of his administration. Hoover favored commissions because he believed that government should work closely with associations, particularly trade associations. His governing philosophy has been described by historian Ellis Hawley as a vision of the "associative state," a vision that the U.S. may be much closer to than many realize. Hoover's affinity for extra-governmental vehicles to devise policy is reflected, perhaps even amplified, in President Reagan's propensity to look first for solutions outside of government (e.g., the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control).

But the vision of an "associative state" points to an underlying factor in this commission mania, namely the growing efforts of outside interest groups to look for new arenas for the promotion of their positions on issues. As political parties are declining in their policy roles, organized interest groups and special interest movements have increased in visibility and strength (with the media's assistance). Evidence of this can be found in the House Education Committee's creation of a Task Force on Merit Pay, a bipartisan commission whose twenty-one members include the presidents of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National Conference of Parents and Teachers. The Task Force was seen, in part, as an attempt to defuse the political advantage that President Reagan was seen to be gaining from his promotion of merit pay. (Its recommendations, issued on October 11, stated that merit pay was worth experimenting with but wouldn't substitute for raising teacher's salaries across the board. NEA President Mary Futrell raised a dissent that the final report had retreated too far on the question of the federal role in teachers' pay.)

The Merit Pay panel did afford major education interests a publicized forum for their issues, but it pales in comparison to the ambitions these interests manifested in the proposal for a National Summit Conference on Education, which passed the House on October 3. This measure calls for a summit conference to formulate a national education policy. A twelve-member executive committee, with two members apiece appointed by the president, the House speaker, and Senate majority leader, and six appointed by the governors, will be responsible for selecting no more than two hundred participants from among nominees furnished by educational organizations and other groups.

In addition to the associations noted in the Merit Pay panel—the NEA, AFT, and PTA—the idea of a summit conference has the backing of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, and all other major educational associations, including the School Boards Association, the School Administrations Association, and the American Vocational Association.

During the House debate on the Education Summit Conference proposal, Republican Rep. Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin said, in support of the measure: "Perhaps the greatest problem facing education today is the politicization of our education system. I do not know when it started . . . whether it started with the activism of various education associations in the political arena . . . but certainly it has become evident since the various national commission reports have come out."

Gunderson went on to observe that "education is too important to play politics with;" and in citing the bill's provisions for racial, geographic, and political balance, particularly the last, he noted with satisfaction, "We have been able in this bill to put a number of assurances in that I think will eliminate the party politics."

If party politics are eliminated in education policy, there are still a lot of choices to be faced in other issue areas. The chief advantage of bipartisanship for many members of Congress is that it simply saves time and allows them a brief respite from the increasingly vast number of policy choices to be considered, deliberated, and decided upon. Political parties are not providing the ideology to assist them in their growing task and it is no wonder that members of Congress, and the president, are turning more frequently to national associations and their innovative forums for help—but at what cost?

JEREMIAH BARUCH

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

THE NUNS' (OLD) STORY

ENCOUNTERING OBSTACLES IS NOTHING NEW

IT SEEMS to be an unhappy fact that our American sisters have been frightening churchmen in Rome half to death. The sisters and the members of the bishops' commission studying American religious (at the behest of Rome) are putting a brave face on the study ordered by Rome (or investigation, depending on one's point of view). "It gives us an opportunity to let the Vatican know what we are doing and how our situation differs from that of sisters in other countries," says the president of a Catholic woman's college. "They will become aware of the direction in which God is calling us," says a former president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

But it is not at all certain that discovery is the real interest of the Vatican. There is in the pope's letter to the religious a sense of "going back," of returning to the original work of a community, of returning to life lived in big convents, of a resumption of the habit. "The unique service of religious . . . lies in the total and public nature of their vowed Christian living, according to the community founding

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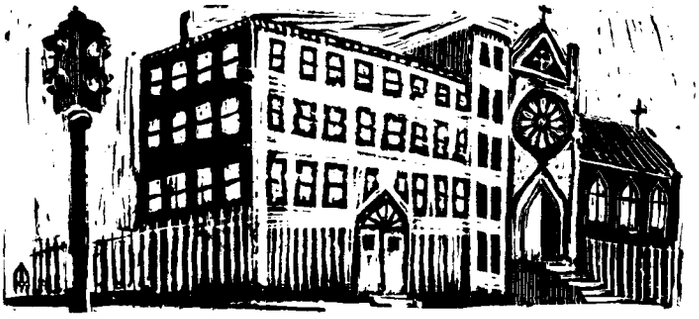
gift approved by ecclesiastical authority."

Why is that threatening? To sisters and their friends who know the history of religious communities the answer is abundantly clear. To quote an editorial in *U.S. Catholic*: "it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the contribution that the nuns have made and are making to the flowering of American Catholicism." The writer is speaking primarily of the teaching sisters who have staffed our schools, academies, and colleges from coast to coast. It is certainly hard to overestimate what they did to preserve the faith of an immigrant people from dozens of different countries and to lift them into the mainstream of American life. Yet, if "ecclesiastical authority" had really held sway—if the bishops had been left to coordinate the church's energies, as the pope puts it—none of the teaching sisters who did this work in the past would have been available. Their religious communities would not have existed. According to one historian it was *two hundred years* after the sisters adopted active apostolates before Rome approved their doing so!

Let us take only one example. In Emily Taft Douglas's book, *Remember the Ladies, The Story of the Women Who Helped Shape America*, she notes, almost as an aside, that immediately after the Revolution an American seeking "solid training" for his daughters would have to send them to certain sectarian schools "such as those of the Ursuline nuns in New Orleans." It is clear in a later context that Douglas ascribed to such convent schools the preparation of the "accomplished French ladies" who so impressed Benjamin Franklin and John Adams during their stays in France. "Catholic France," she wrote, ". . . . had never suppressed its women as had the Puritans."

Yet the truth is that the convent in New Orleans of which she spoke—the first school for girls within the boundaries of what is now the United States—was in 1727 itself the result of decades of struggle. Since the sixteenth century religious women had been banding together to teach young girls and to visit the sick and poor—and again and again had been



forced behind walls and into the cloister. It seemed to be the mind of the church that teaching was worldly and incompatible with the vow of chastity! In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries alone *fifty* such congregations were founded with the purpose of educating girls and were either suppressed or compelled to accept cloister.

With quiet persistence, sisters who felt a calling to an active apostolate found ways around the difficulties put in their paths. The Ursulines formed a fine system of education within the cloister. Others followed the example of St. Vincent de Paul, who found a way outside the cloister for the Daughters of Charity by having them take only simple vows. Still others, like the first Sisters of St. Joseph, sought to remain strictly local so that they would not attract the adverse attention of "ecclesiastical authority." As soon as a group was sufficient in number for local needs, another autonomous group was established in a village or town "a carriage ride away" to do the same work. It is a fascinating history.

In America the first bishops, anxious to have an instructed laity, welcomed the idea of sisters teaching, but the difficulties with Rome continued. One of her biographers tells us that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton—even she, the famed Mother Seton, our first American saint—felt that she had to justify adapting the rule of the Sisters of Charity to include the work of education by urging it *as a way for the sisters to support themselves* and "because it would extend the benefits of religious instruction to a class of society which has the greatest influence on public morals and which [at the time] found very few schools in the United States where a solid and virtuous education might be secured."

What the American sisters have done is prodigious. By World War I they had established ten very good colleges for women. By the 1920s religious women were being educated to take their places on college faculties in the great universities abroad like Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, Munich, and Louvain as well as the finest universities in this country. Today they sponsor the majority of women's colleges in the country and eighty coeducational institutions. Taken together they are the most highly educated group of women in the world, and the group of women with the longest continuous documented history. They achieved these things in spite of hampering and archaic rules which forced them into sometimes ridiculous garb, forbade communities to eat and worship together, and hindered scholarship and study by imposing outmoded hours of rising, retiring, and religious exercises. Those who have chosen to remain sisters today in a period of great change are dedicated women as sisters have always been.

Rome acts on complaints from the local churches. No doubt many misguided Americans have complained about our sisters. They should remember that our sisters are neither pets or children to be taken out on yearly outings to circuses or ball games and treated to ice cream and cotton candy. They are mature women in a period of transition. They hear different calls—the most compelling of which is "to be with the poor." Undoubtedly they will make, and have made, mistakes. (The undervaluing of community may be one of them.) I hope that they will rediscover the work of education as one of the most valid ways of empowerment. But not everyone is called to that work or to the running of institutions. We must let them find their own way. We owe them that.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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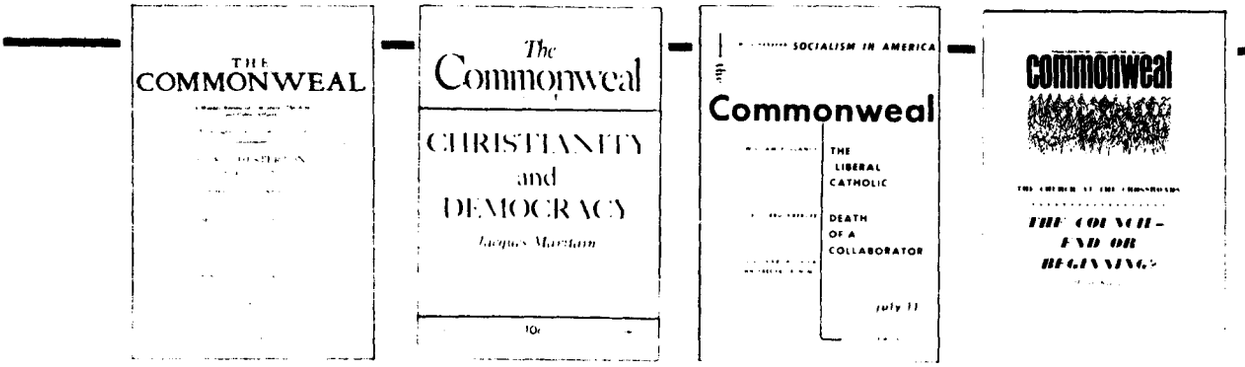

From the first year

Commonweal begins its sixtieth year of publication

WITH THIS issue, *Commonweal* begins its sixtieth year of publication. Dated November 12, 1924, the first issue of the magazine opened its lead editorial by noting that as it went to press, "the election returns are far from complete but it is known that Calvin Coolidge has been decisively chosen as the next President of the United States." In the twelve months leading to its sixtieth birthday, *Commonweal* plans occasionally to mark its history, beginning with this selection of material from the first year of publication.

Certain characteristics of *Commonweal* were established from the start. The magazine intended to speak to American Catholics but, as importantly, to "the mind of the whole American people." Its first article was by a non-Catholic. (Its second article was by G. K. Chesterton, on "Religion and Sex.") Michael Williams, the journal's dynamic founder and first editor, insisted on the need to convey "the Catholic outlook . . . as distinct from what might be called the Catholic inlook." The editors wanted to clear a space for Catholic views in the American culture generally—but also for reflection and self-assessment within the American church.

In 1924-25, the Ku Klux Klan was targeting Catholics, and genteel forms of Klanism were not unknown in the most respectable circles—all of which absorbed a good bit of editorial attention in *Commonweal*. The editors had to deal at length with the Oregon school law which only a Supreme Court decision prevented from outlawing parochial education and compelling all parents to send their children to public schools. Such issues are now largely forgotten by almost everyone but scholars. But *Commonweal* also gave extensive and lively coverage (to be surveyed in a future issue) to the Scopes trial and the many attendant questions of religion, science, democracy, and education that are as challenging today as six decades ago.

Although originally hard pressed to collect the funds needed to begin the magazine, by the date of its first issue *Commonweal* had received considerable support, a good deal of it pledged by conservative Catholics. Such affluence was not to last, alas. And one reason for celebrating the journal's longevity is to remind ourselves of the sacrifices and generosity that have kept *Commonweal* going—and to renew our hope that such a tradition can be maintained vigorously into the future.

THE EDITORS

CATHOLIC & INDEPENDENT

WE BELIEVE that THE COMMONWEAL will be so fundamentally different . . . that in place of competition in an over-crowded field we shall occupy a position that hitherto has been left vacant. . . . As sure background THE COMMONWEAL will have the continuous, unbroken tradition and teachings of the historic Mother Church.

But it will be in no sense—nor could it possibly assert itself to be—an authoritative or authorized mouthpiece of the Catholic Church. It will be the independent, personal product of its editors and contributors, who, for the most part, will be laymen. Its pages will be open to writers holding different forms of Christian belief, and in some cases to authors who do not profess any form of Christian faith. Where the opinion of its editors, contributors, and readers differs on subjects yet unsettled by competent authority, it will be an open forum for the discussion of such differences in a spirit of good temper.

—The Editors, "An Introduction," November 12, 1924

PATRIOTISM & NATIONALISM

A . . . PROBLEM now confronting this country, as it confronts all countries, is not a bread-and-butter problem. . . . it is an emotional problem, and as such it is difficult to define or deal with. I refer to the contemporary confusion of proper and ennobling patriotism with intolerant blatant nationalism. . . . Between pure patriotism and Christianity there can be no conflict. Nationalism, however, is something else. It is a vainglorious assumption that one's own nation is

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superior to all other nations and entitled to pursue its selfish ends without any regard to others' welfare. Its roots are selfishness and pride, and its whole spirit is antithetical to that of Christianity. . . . Catholic Americans have a very important contribution to make to this whole problem. They are citizens of America and they are members of a universal non-national Church; their faith teaches them to love and service their country but it also teaches them that all men are brothers and that nations have obligations as well as rights. They must cling to the patriotism that is humble, and they must shun the nationalism that is proud.

—Carlton J. H. Hayes "Obligations to America"
January 14, 1925

RELIGION & SCIENCE

A QUESTION which often disturbs thoughtful minds is to what extent religious belief is allowed by science. Anxiety on the point is very marked in modern literature. It is not too much to say that it is the dominant note of the poetic output of the Victorian age. Poignant expression was given to it in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. In his case religious hope remained even though its warrant seemed doubtful, but in general, the tendency was towards a surrender to agnosticism. Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" more truly anticipated the usual outcome. . . .

The Catholic answer is that there is an order of things which the proofs and verifications of the physicists cannot touch, whose data are gathered not in the scientific laboratory but from revelation, history, and personal experience. The comment of science used to be that such notions are quite illusory, and that in reality all events and occurrences, including the processes of thought and invention, are determined wholly by physical antecedents and are fixed and inevitable in their nature. It is however quite noticeable that scientific opinion of this order has never been allowed to rule conduct in the practical affairs of life. No man was ever tempted to handle a hornets' nest by reflecting that scientifically it is merely a particular concourse of atoms. And if a scientist's nose is tweaked he cannot be appeased by the suggestion that notion of personal insult is illusory—a mere by-product of chemical reaction in his system. When philosophy has done its worst, people will still pick and choose, love and hate, plan and strive, and all this quite as much by those who describe man as an epiphenomenon as by those who believe in free agency.

It is a remarkable circumstance that now when the utilitarian value of science is immensely greater than ever before, confidence in the philosophical value of its concepts is rapidly diminishing. The fact is now recognized—and by none more distinctly than by the physicists themselves—that the progress of science gathers much about the how, but little about the why. . . . To the question whether science allows the existence of a sphere for religion it may be answered that it is not a matter over which science has any jurisdiction. It lies quite out of its reach, as both Huxley and Mill candidly admit. . . . The changes that are going on in scientific thought have not yet had much effect upon imaginative literature, but in time they will. . . .

—The Editors, "Religion and Science"
March 4, 1925

CHILD LABOR

WHEN the Mayor of Nome made his appeal for help in the diptheria plague, he . . . forgot to be worried about the grown men and women who were in danger, and called for help only "in the name of the children—the future American citizens." At once the dog-teams started mushing North on their errand of mercy and human decency.

We don't do things that way down here, where life is softer. On the same day that the epidemic broke in Nome, the legislatures in three states decided that the young children in the sweatshops and factories of the nation could be used up and thrown on the rubbish pile like old mop rags, for all they cared. . . . The daily grind of ten hours or more at bench and wheel, the nights of weariness and abandon, the accidents from power machinery that come more frequently to adolescents than to others, the poisoning of dyes and varnish fumes, these things are the always possible heritage of the 990,000 children employed, not on the farms, but in commerce and industry. . . . These things are out of sight, behind factory walls. . . . We forget simply because most of us never knew them personally, because most of us have enough sorrow in our lives, and because they do not thrust themselves upon our attention even to the same extent as a typhoid plague or a chicken cholera epidemic. . . .

With . . . the American ideal we all agree, and yet it has not brought us far along the road toward abolishing inequalities that necessarily result from child labor. We agree with our minds, and then let our imagination run wild, till Washington looks like Moscow, individualism like communism, and Congress seems like a haunted house of which we must speak ill and be afraid. . . .

—Owen R. Lovejoy
"Ratify the Twentieth Amendment"
March 4, 1925

THE CATHOLIC TEMPERAMENT

EVEN AMONG well-disposed people, quite willing to accord to the Catholic Church the respectful consideration which they are in the habit of extending to all denominations, there is a sort of puzzlement about its beliefs and practices. . . . Indeed casual intercourse with Catholics often tends to increase the puzzlement. . . . The average Catholic seems to be strangely indifferent to such matters. It is usually so difficult to draw him into arguments and explanations that there is a pretty general impression that the ordinary run of Catholics do not know as much about their church as the ordinary run of people do about the denominations to which they belong.

Opinion of this nature implies such deep misunderstandings of Catholic temperament and habits of thought that . . .

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DEPARTMENT OF GREAT PREDICTIONS

THE RUSSIAN people . . . are bound to have their chance on the stage of the world's progress. The question is, what shall that place be, and how will they utilize it? Few, except those badly bitten by the germ of Communism, believe that the present Russian system can long survive. Impartial observers, who have been in close touch with affairs there, believe that already death has taken possession of its members, that the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics seems destined to disappear almost as suddenly as it has arisen. . . .

—The Editors, "Russia Passes into History"
July 8, 1925

probably the the most available mode of throwing light upon it is to resort to analogy. Suppose then that one should get on such free and easy terms with an average Briton as to put to him such questions as these—"How can you reconcile yourself to being the subject of a king when you think of such a ruler as Richard III? How is it that you fellows put up with a monarch at all, instead of estabishing a republic and electing its president as we do?" . . . The average Briton would be apt first to give you a stare of astonishment, but about all he would say would be that their form of government suited them very well. . . . If you could look into his mind you would not find there a particle of interest in the affairs of Richard III. . . . And you would further find that there was a sharp distinction in his thought between the crown as an office and the personality of the king. He could hold the one in profound esteem and yet feel entirely free to criticize the other. He was content to be a British subject not because he approved of everything in the history of his country or in the behavior of her rulers, but because he believed that thereby he obtained the benefits of an organization of authority which maintained public order and individual freedom. . . .

The thought of the average Catholic runs very much on similar lines. He does not feel that it is any more necessary for him to be an expert in history or theology to be a good Catholic than it is necessary for one to study the decisions of the Supreme Court to be a good American citizen. He is well aware that the Church makes ample provision for expert attention to such matters . . . and that contents him. That is why the issues turning upon questions of biblical interpretation and their theological formulation, which are now disturbing the great Protestant denominations, do not make even a ripple among the Catholic laity. . . . They believe that popular agitation and decisions by casual vote in a transient assembly are as poor a way of settling such questions as they would be of construing the constitution of the United States. . . .

The truth is that matters of this order, which among our Protestant friends are very much to the fore, are among Catholics quite back and away from their ordinary moods. The aspect in which they are in the habit of contemplating the Church is not as a system of authority but as a spiritual home, which makes the universe a companionable and comfortable place in which to be. . . .

—The Editors, "Imperfect Sympathies"
February 18, 1925

VICTIMIZING IMMIGRANTS

WHAT ADULT in the genus Nordic does not recall the exquisite thrill that was his when in childhood he was privileged to pull the pigtail of the Chinese laundryman, or pelt the "Wop" fruit vendor with snowballs? The thrill of those bygone halcyon days was not based on any special dislike of the Chinaman or the Italian, it was simply the gratification of boyhood's inherent barbarism. And it so happened that the "Chink" and the "Wop," being foreigners, were fair game. They couldn't hit back. . . .

It's a truism to say that men are simply boys grown older. And, of course, members of Congress (except the Lady from California) are also boys grown up. And this is the explanation, perhaps, of how it happened on the afternoon of February 10, 1925, the House of Representatives of the Congress of these United States made merry with a pigtail pulling and snowball throwing that—be it said with prayerful thankfulness—has few parallels in legislative history. It was on that afternoon that the House passed H.R. 11796 "to provide for the deportation of certain aliens, and for other purposes."

The bill was euphemistically described as proposing legislation which would authorize deportation of aliens who were guilty of violations of the anti-narcotic and anti-liquor laws of the United States. In reality, as it passed the House, the bill would convey to the immigration authorities the power to deport any alien upon whom their displeasure might chance to fix its capricious self. . . .

—William C. Murphy, "Outlawing the Alien"
March 11, 1925

'RERUM NOVARUM'

NO MORE practical step to encourage lay Catholics to do something more with their religion than simply to consider it a private and personal affair, with no relation to the social problems of the age, has been undertaken for a long time than the movement to popularize the study of the great Encyclical on the Condition of Labor, of Pope Leo XIII. . . . Although it was written thirty-four years ago, and was prompted by conditions at that time—so comprehensive, farsighted, and sound were its pronouncements, that it has remained the fundamental statement of the Catholic position. . . . **—The Editors, "Week By Week"**
May 13, 1925

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CATHOLICS & PEACE

DO WE UNDERSTAND what havoc was wrought by the last great war—what vaster havoc is certain to be wrought by another great war? Do we appreciate the special causes of international war in our age—the anarchistic system of jealous, selfish, sovereign states—the intolerant, boastful sentiment of nationalism—the economic rivalries, coupled with abuses of capitalism and with the philosophy of might and mania for bigness—the competition in national armaments—the tortuous conduct of secret diplomacy? Do we inform ourselves of what has been done to deal with the causes of war? Do we reach reasoned convictions as to what more must be done in order to establish effectively international peace? Sound information and healthy interest must accompany each other, and both precede conviction.

The problem, in its manifold ramifications, is not the concern alone of any political party or racial group or religious body in the United States. It is the vital concern of all American citizens. And yet, by a curious irony of circumstances, both in information on international affairs, and in interest in the problem of peace, Catholic Americans, as a whole, lag behind their Protestant fellow-countrymen, and lag far behind their own European co-religionists. I said, "by a curious irony of circumstance," because of all the people who do not, and yet should, concern themselves with fundamental international problems, Catholic Americans stand foremost. Their Church is international in foundation, in tradition, in organization, and in spirit. Its gospel is international and humanitarian. Its teaching is of those very virtues upon which, it is universally admitted, the future peace of the world must rest—humility, justice, and charity. Its distinctive unity and universality, as well as its mission, are endangered by war, and by the causes of war, to a much greater degree than are the localism and separateness of any Protestant church. And if civilization receives irreparable hurt from another war, it will be preeminently that civilization which has received life and being from the Catholic Church. . . .

—Carlton J. H. Hayes, "Let Us Make Peace"
July 1, 1925

MUSSOLINI'S FASCISM

THE GREAT congress of the Fascisti marked the climax of melodrama in politics. With black shirts, medals, huzzahs, feathers, and speeches, Italy pledged to Mussolini the power to inaugurate a new regime. . . . The world may gasp, speculation in the lira may reach a point of frenzy, American debt commissions may suggest that something ought to be done about sums outstanding since 1917—but all of this cannot curb the will of Italy's strong men to set up a Bolshevism à rebours. A dozen institutions—good and bad—will have gone by the board. Rome's press is gagged, the might of political Masonry is tottering, the grip of a firm governmental hand on all forms of industry is the order of the day.

To some extent, everyone who knows Italy must concede that Fascism has done considerable work to remedy the ingrained social ills of the country. . . . But the fundamental principle of Fascism is as mystifying as it is dangerous. The world cannot assimilate this autocracy of positivism, any more than it can digest the rhapsodies of Trotsky. It even begins to seem as though the supreme test case of Mussolini's power would be the Catholic Church. Some time ago . . . the Dictator . . . made Catholicism the culture of Italy, and restored the universality of religious education. With one sweep he abolished all the heresies, the schisms, the agnosticisms of the modern era. In return, however, it seems to have been expected that Catholics as a body would invest in black shirts and feathers. Mussolini tried to wipe out with a gesture the splendid achievement of Don Sturzo and his friends. But the Catholics have sometimes proved recalcitrant—there have been Fascist attacks . . . and the Holy Father has had to protest against violence and unfairness. It is impossible to tell if more serious developments may be in store. . . .

—The Editors, "Week by Week"
July 8, 1925

DEPARTMENT OF THINGS WE WISH WE HADN'T SAID

I HAVE NEVER known a happy marriage which maintained sex equality as a tenet. . . . Equality is a stark thing from the point of view of the normal woman . . . equality precludes spoiling, and what woman worth her powder can live wholly without that? What woman of charm would not feel her marriage a failure were she forced to do so? It precludes tenderness, it precludes absurdity, and . . . the cultivation of the little language everyone in love speaks (and no one admits they do) of intimacies. . . .

Again, equality implies independence, with a dash of arrogance thereto, moreover, and to the vast majority of women it stands really for supremacy! Your feminine sex-equality advocate does not really want to share life on the level with man; she wants to go one better and direct it . . . .

Being a romantic woman, and therefore regarding all men as children, I realize what cherished toys they give up in order to make a home, to marry, and have the privilege of supporting a woman all her life, and how eagerly and simply they set about this deed, inspired thereto by the thought of a woman's dependence on them, her need of their strength; and I cannot see what on earth any happy normal woman can hope to gain from equality.

Olive Wadsley, "Marriage and Sex Equality"
February 25, 1925

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LEWIS MUMFORD ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

FROM THE CHURCHES at Ravenna down to the most florid and overblown outbursts of the Baroque in Spain and Italy, the Roman Catholic churches have always been built in harmony with the major buildings of their period; and although the medieval mason quite certainly didn't regard the House of God as on the "same footing with commercial and industrial buildings," he used the same mode of construction and decoration: the barns and kitchens of the ruined abbey at Glastonbury are as fine and beautiful as the abbey church itself must have been—and they are fine and beautiful in the same way.

Yet there is something ruthless in the modern skyscraper and grain elevator and factory that makes a sensitive person feel instinctively that the mode of construction is at odds with humane and religious ends. . . . This feeling of antagonism drives people back into the sanctuary of the past, and they build churches that have something of the outward shape and semblance of a Romanesque or a Norman or a perpendicular building; but the fate of these churches, even the best of them, is to show on every stone the arid marks of our mechanical culture. . . . The result is that our efforts to reproduce a Gothic or a Romanesque shell are less significant, aesthetically, than the run of buildings we seek to escape; for with all their imperfections the latter buildings are alive, and with their studied gestures, our reproductions are cold and dead.

. . . We must have the practical sagacity to build with the materials we are most familiar with, and to adopt the mode of construction the architect and builder work most courageously in today. . . . What this principle does mean is that the architect shall restrict himself to providing a well-designed and well-produced shell, frankly a shell, with no attempt to catch the spirit, through ornament or constructional imitation, of other "styles" and periods. . . .

But how express the religious purpose of the building? Does not the Gothic help us here—do not towers help—does not at least a little stained glass come in? The answer to this is that the religious aim of expressing solemnity, peace, and inner communion with Deity is not promoted by erecting a building whose details are in no wise different in execution, however different in aim, from those of a bank or a moving picture theatre: the point is that we must express the religious character of a church by doing things that a commercial building would not think of doing. One of the ways of doing this in a city is to devote the funds that are saved by a simple, vernacular mode of construction to the purchase of land sufficient for a park or garden, screening the church from the dust and noise of the streets, putting it apart from the mundane buildings that now jostle it and jeer it, and, incidentally, providing a resting place for mothers and babies.

Another way of establishing the character of the building is by providing the architect with a plot sufficiently large so that by creating bays for the chapels or by altering the proportions of transepts, chancel, and nave, he can model the building as a whole . . . to achieve his main effects . . . by his characteristic manner of enclosing space. . . . In a Catholic church the possibilities offered by combining the stable elements of the Catholic ritual with the variable elements of site and the surrounding street, are literally infinite.

But what of tower or steeple? . . . Nowadays . . . it is as well to leave the towers to Mammon, and to achieve the same purpose not by an outward gesture but by an inward grace. . . . The intimate expression of the Catholic spirit must come through its treatment of the altar, the Communion table, the shrines, the baptismal font. . . . There should be greater room for free and gracious expressions at these points: it is absurd to think that the aesthetic expression of the Savior, the Mother of Heaven, or the saints should become fossilized at some particular moment in the church's life, so that thereafter the robe and vesture and very anatomical form should express only the conceptions and limitations of that moment; and it is even worse when these models are stereotyped and deadened by the methods and workmanship of the commercial market. . . .

ALTHOUGH Catholic communicants no doubt see beyond the tawdry reality of the living symbol, as a little girl reads into her rag-doll the glow of a living baby, the ornament and statuary that fill so many modern churches point to a sad compromise with utilitarianism. All the while devout Catholics like Cezanne, and sincere religious spirits like Van Gogh, to pick out two great examples from an older generation, have shared the homelessness of the modern artist, instead of finding a place for themselves within the churches. That a robust modern art is not incompatible with Catholicism . . . is proved by the work in our own day of Mr. Eric Gill in England. If Catholics would have a living art once more in their churches they would single out these artists, would foster their work, would give opportunity to apprentices and disciples. . . . The notion that art needs vast endowments of money is unsound. Where the artist is given scope for workmanship he will work for a day's wages and be glad to get it. If secular painters like Diego de Rivera will work on these terms, as he is now working on the government buildings and schools in Mexico, why should the Church not be able to foster a corps of painters and sculptors who would work in the same manner? From a purely practical standpoint, genuine art is as cheap as its substitutes; and it is only our own dullness, our own lack of discrimination, that lets us accept the muddled unfermented grape juice of commercial vendage instead of the true wine of the spirit.

—Lewis Mumford, "Architecture and Catholicism"
April 15, 1925

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ON PROHIBITION

WE HAVE recently seen a change in the attitude of the Federal Government towards enforcement of the [Eighteenth Amendment]; in three separate states political campaigns are being fought primarily around the attitude of the nominee towards liquor; and, like the population, the supply of flasks increases every minute. Is there, one asks rather doubtfully, a right and a wrong in this matter? . . . The whole question may be a joke to the juvenile hordes who stagger through college proms; it may amuse the wayward many who scamper down secret staircases towards the vat that foams in silence. It is anything but a jest to the crowds which have been mowed down by poisonous drinks, to the dozens of poor devils who have gone to their deaths at the hands of revenue officers, to the rising capitalists who have made of smuggling an easy avenue to millions. It must also be vastly more than a diverting riddle to those who assume that governmental authority is a precious and sacred matter, basic to the smoothing of all our relations one with the other, and nursed in the shadow of the Divine hand. . . .

Wise old Le Play observed that good government is always a matter of constructive compromise. Because prohibition in the United States has refused to compromise, it has driven itself into a jam which it seeks to unravel with brute force and headsrong will. . . . And so each day brings its fresh waste of men, money, energy and the spirit of cooperation. . . . It is argued that the thing can be pushed through, finally. We are told that the chain of graft, indiscretion, and woe, can finally be transmuted into a wreath as sweet and dry as the withered laurel taken from a Roman tomb. But seven years have produced no evidence in support of this contention. . . . All those who have attained a real eminence for knowledge of American affairs concede—very frequently in public—that the Eighteenth Amendment, as at present enforced, stands condemned. **—The Editors, "The Prohibition Jam"**
August 19, 1925

METHODIST REFORMERS

THE BOARD of Temperance of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ensconced in its Washington headquarters, has just loosed a broadside at the expense of the intelligentsia. "These people," it was asserted, "may be intelligentsia, but it is strange that they do not even know when the time has arrived for a haircut." The observation is remarkably realistic for so visionary a group as the board; and one wished that it might be a symptom of awakening intelligence. Much of what these people want—the curtailing of erotic literature and the improvement of the theatre—is eminently desirable. . . . But when it comes to a discussion of methods, the board and its associates are about as discerning as the Headless Horseman. They never condescend to make a reasoned analysis of the situation, or of the remedial measures that might be introduced. Action for them spells a tincture of federal legislation, guaranteed to foment rebellion, to waste the public funds, and to develop a system of underground subterfuge. The average American is not interested in the intelligentsia; but he is interested in hoping that there will be no identification of Pilgrim's Progress and the Congressional Record. Methodist boards have done more to corrode morals in the United States than two dozen agencies of perdition. . . .

—The Editors, "Week by Week"
August 5, 1925

CATHOLIC SOCIAL CONCERN

WHAT MEMBERS of the hierarchy, thoughtful students, and experienced leaders have continually said we repeat firmly—it is not sufficient, in this day and age, that the individual take cognizance of himself alone. The life of the race is becoming, more and more, a tangle of social concerns. Industrial conditions have generally created a common culture which suffers no isolation of body or spirit. We are dependent upon mass organization for our shoes and suppers; we are forced to derive the building materials of the soul from the generally accepted quarries. What unsettles the world in our time is, fundamentally, its diet of ideas; what can remedy and fortify it is simply improvement of that diet. We ourselves are convinced that the amelioration can come only out of the great gardens of the Catholic mind—the satisfying abundance of that which is called Christendom. Profit cannot be derived, however, out of a mere, sterile past. Today—these hours when a new world is rousing—must produce its own leadership and life.

How much has the American Catholic done to influence the trend of his age? The answer comes in a kind of melancholy chorus—so much less than he might! Churches have been built; schools established; the foundations of a healthy and beneficent parish life laid. But though all these things are a source of just pride, they must not be allowed to blind us to the peculiar generic necessities of the time which are social, even as the Church itself is social. We ought not, for instance, to be indifferent towards the problem of international peace, which a succession of Sovereign Pontiffs has set before the faithful as a sacred goal. . . . There are other matters of almost equal importance. We cannot afford to sever Christian principle from the practice of industrial business; we ought not to assume that we can share in the direction of the American mind unless we are ready to foster intellectual leadership; and our talk of Catholic art is sorry stuff while we leave the general tenor of the country's aesthetic experience unaffected, excepting by cheap approximations to the rue Saint Sulpice—or even plaster Gothic.

Never has there been greater need for some American Ozanam or Count de Mun, who shall gather his fellows round him for a mission of social peace. . . . Poverty and opposition have not, and cannot, shackle us; the danger is that our complacency may keep us in perennial bondage. . . .

There are those who feel that all talk about social activity is quite like band-music—suited to occasions and gatherings, but

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not the normal stuff of life. Well, it has been on the lips of Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, and Augustine; just as much as it has been the revolutionary concern of Marx, Jaurés and Lenin. Whether we wish it or not, the great debate which those names signify rushes to an outcome by which our children shall be made or marred. The "deluge" that can so comfortably be projected into the future may swirl, not only over the machinery and wealth of civilization, but also terribly and abysmally over souls.

—The Editors, "Life and Leadership"
September 2, 1925

HILAIRE BELLOC & THE CONSTITUTION

ONE OF THE most arresting of modern contrasts, full of practical effect, and affecting all our international relations, is hardly recognized over here in Europe, nor in America. And yet, until it is appreciated, all discussions upon relations between the old world and the new is bound to go wrong.

It is the contrast between the attitude of European nations today towards their constitutions, and the attitude of the American people towards theirs.

The Constitution of the United States has, for the citizens of the United States, a religious value. It has the value of an unquestioned authority; a moderator. It forms a keel or balance. It supplies the conceptions at once of certitude and permanence in its own particular field, which is that of the temporal government of man.

Now among European nations, as nations, there is nothing of the kind. . . .

—Hilaire Belloc, "On Constitutions"
September 16, 1925

TO LIVE MYSTICALLY

CHRISTIAN mysticism has nothing in common with esoteric doctrines. It consists chiefly in self-renunciation in order to follow Jesus Christ; in loving God above everything, and our fellow creatures because of Him; in answering fully and unreservedly every call of grace; in always acting in conformity with our faith, and in becoming more and more conscious of the divine life already lying latent within us, which, at the time of our death, will open into full splendor. To live mystically is to live the life of heaven on earth.

—Felix Klein, "Mysticism, A Question of Today"
September 16, 1925

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ROLE OF THE LAITY

ARE THERE not many forms of social and intellectual work in which laymen, fully accepting spiritual and moral guidance, are (simply because they are laymen, and hence have forms of experience only partially, if at all, open to the clergy) much better fitted to devise and direct the practical means and ways by which these principles may be fruitfully expressed?

We are of the opinion that both the clergy and intelligent laymen concur in giving an affirmative answer to this question. . . .

—The Editors, "What Shall the Layman Do?"
September 23, 1925

GKC ON RELIGION & EDUCATION

IT IS only by a definite and even deliberate narrowing of the mind that we can keep religion out of education. I do not deny that it may, in certain cases, be the least of many evils; that it may be a sort of loyalty to a political compromise; that it is certainly better than a political injustice. But secular education is a limitation, if it be only a self-limitation. The natural thing is to say what you think about nature; and especially, so to speak, about the nature of nature. The first and most obvious thing that a person is interested in is what sort of world he is living in, and why he is living in it. If you do not know, of course, you will not be able to say; but . . . if you have convictions upon these cosmic and fundamental things, whether negative or positive, you are an instructor who is on one most important point refusing to instruct. Your motive may be generous, or it may be merely timid; but certainly it is not in itself educational.

It is sometimes said that the devotees of a doctrinal religion, who are so often depicted as donkeys, are in matters of this kind wearing blinkers. The word is not wisely chosen by the critic. . . . The man who teaches authoritative answers to ultimate questions, even if he only says that Mumbo Jumbo made the world out of a pumpkin, may be dogmatizing or persecuting or tyrannically laying down the law about everything, but he is not blinking anything. . . . If there is such a thing in the world as a donkey deliberately wearing blinkers, it is the enlightened educationist, who is always making a nervous effort to keep out of his task of imparting knowledge any reference to the things that men from the beginning of the world have most wanted to know. . . .

—G. K. Chesterton, "Religion and Education"
October 14, 1925

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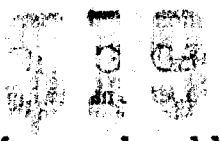

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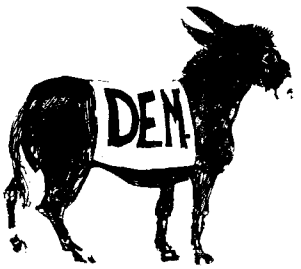

The dilemma of an anti-abortion Democrat

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

THE STORY goes that Hegel, whose doctrine was anything but orthodox Christianity, was once challenged as to how he reconciled his teaching with the tenets of the Lutheran church. "I was born a Lutheran," muttered Hegel, not always the most agreeable of conversationalists, "and I intend to die a Lutheran."

Well, I was born a Democrat, I've always been a Democrat, and I intend to die a Democrat. But sometimes that loyalty is not easy to maintain — and not, as in Hegel's case, because I've fallen into heresy, but because the leaders in my party have sometimes gone chasing after strange new gods. Vietnam was a case in point in the years when Lyndon Johnson was president and almost all the Democrats in Congress were supporting the war, albeit with rather long faces. Abortion is a case in point today.

Back on October 2, 1983, six Democratic presidential candidates — Walter Mondale, John Glenn, Alan Cranston, Gary Hart, Ernest Hollings, and George McGovern—addressed the annual convention of the National Organization for Women and assured NOW members that they endorsed the constitutional right to have an abortion. (The seventh candidate, Reubin Askew, was not present.)

Strictly speaking, this was no surprise. The liberal wing of the Democratic party has long been emphatically pro-choice; thus liberals Mondale, Cranston, Hart, and McGovern could hardly be expected to be anything but pro-choice. It is clear also that candidates from the "moderate" sector of the party, Glenn and Hollings, though they hope to win the nomination without a great deal of support from the liberals, have no chance of winning either the nomination or the ensuing election if they provoke the active hostility of the liberals; and taking an anti-choice stand on abortion is a sure-fire way of provoking that hostility.

So I wasn't surprised to hear that my party is the party of abortion in America. I had always known that, yet somehow that knowledge hadn't really come home to me until I read the newspaper report of the NOW convention. This tardy realization is a tribute no doubt to the dullness of my imagination. It is attributable also to the fact that my political life is lived not at the national but at the state and local level, where anti-abortion Democrats are a good deal more plentiful than they are in Washington. This is especially true in my state, rather conservative and heavily Catholic, where anti-abortion Democrat politicians are the rule, not the exception. At home we just don't get the feeling that we belong to America's pro-abortion party.

But we do. And the question that occurs to me is this: How can we continue to support a national party, how can we support its candidate for president, when that party and that candidate adopt a pro-choice position — that is, leaving euphemisms aside, a pro-abortion position?

The trouble is, of course, that we have no place else to go. Clearly we cannot turn Republican. Most of us simply do not have the stomach for that. And those who do couldn't turn for *this* Republican president and his followers. But we could always sit on our hands, contrary to our nature as political animals though that may be.

"So what's the problem?" I'll be asked. "Politics is the art of the possible. Anyone who insists that his political leaders and associates must agree with him on 100 percent of the issues is more a fanatic than a politician. For those of us who are politicians, not members of the purist or lunatic fringe, the thing to do is to get behind the party and candidate whose views most closely coincide with ours, always realizing we'll never get everything we want. If you're anti-abortion and that party and its presidential candidate are pro-abortion — well, that's too bad. But sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Life is largely a matter of making the best of bad situations, and the best option in 1984 is to support the Democratic party and its pro-choice candidate for president, meanwhile leaving to heaven the hopes of the anti-abortion cause. Right?"

Wrong. Abortion is not simply one more issue. At least it is not if it is what we say it is, namely, something in the area of homicide or probable homicide. It's one thing to disagree, say, with Walter Mondale's neo-protectionist utterances regarding imports of steel and automobiles; then to put that in the balance against all the things I agree with him on; and finally to conclude, as I see the balance tip in his favor, "What's a little neo-protectionism among friends?" But it's quite something else to say, "What's a little homicide among friends?" If abortion really is the killing of a person, then it must weigh very heavily in the balance, so heavily that it is difficult to

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imagine what collection of agreements with Mondale or any other pro-choice Democrat could outweigh it.

Having gone this far and having begun, I fear, to sound a little like Phyllis Schlafly and her right-wing friends, with their tendency to speak of the pro-choice party as supporting the "right to kill babies," let me tone down my remarks by offering a few qualifications.

First, I don't believe the typical abortion to be homicide so much as I believe it to be *probable* homicide. That is, I'm not convinced that personhood begins at the moment of conception, though I'd agree that is the single most likely moment of its commencement. Rather I think there is some probability that the person exists from the moment of conception, a probability that becomes greater the longer the pregnancy lasts, until finally it reaches a point of virtual certainty.

Second, probable homicide is almost as wrong as certain homicide, and the greater the probability the more its wrongness approaches the wrongness of certain homicide.

Third, on the view just given, abortions in certain cases would be justifiable early in the pregnancy, given sufficiently grave reasons; and the later the date in the pregnancy the more grave the reason would have to be. In other words, a few abortions might be allowable, but anything remotely resembling abortion-on-demand would be condemned.

Fourth, I deplore the fevered anti-abortion rhetoric that speaks of persons who advocate, tolerate, or participate in abortion as "killers" or "murderers." To deserve those ignominious titles one would have to engage in abortion while at the same time believing the act to be unjustifiable homicide. Clearly this is not what happens.

BUT WITH ALL these qualifications, abortion is still a horrendous thing. However fine the pro-choice people may be in their intentions, however little their subjective guilt may be, abortion remains either homicide or probable homicide. So I repeat my question: How can we support a national party and its presidential candidate when they are supporting abortion? In fact, can it not be said that in a sense we are more at fault than they are? At least they have the excuse of invincible ignorance (some of them very invincible indeed): they believe their pro-choice position is right, no matter how mistaken that belief may be. But we, who realize the pro-choice position is wrong, continue to support its supporters.

The truth of the matter is, I'm afraid, that the great majority of anti-abortion Democrats (and I include myself in this reproach) haven't done nearly as much as we could have in support of our announced position. Despite being, like Avis, number two in our party, we haven't tried harder. On the contrary, it's the pro-choice people in the Democratic party who are full of passionate intensity, while we, if we don't quite lack all conviction, seem not to have a great deal of it. From time to time we may speak or write against abortion. If we hold public office, we may occasionally get a chance to cast a vote, largely symbolic, against it. But we're such good sports about losing, not insisting that there be any "linkage" between abortion and anything else, that the leadership of the national party may be forgiven when it treats our lukewarm opposition to abortion as though it were tantamount to no opposition at all.

There are reasons for this lukewarmness. (1) Right-wing opponents of abortion like Phyllis Schlafly and Rev. Jerry Falwell and their followers have given anti-abortionism such a bad name among reasonable people that we're reluctant to join forces, or even to be perceived as joining forces, with them. (2) Pro-choice Democrats are in agreement with us on a wide range of non-abortion issues; so we don't like the prospect of getting into either a public or a private brawl with them. Besides, they are commonly (or so at least I find) likable people — much more so than the right-wing anti-abortionists, whose hostility to abortion, one suspects, is often motivated by something less amiable than the love of life they've written across their banners. (3) We think we detect more than a hint of fanaticism among both the militant anti-abortionists and the militant pro-abortionists, and we're unwilling to join the fray and thus contribute to the intensification of political passions. (4) Since we belong to a party which has traditionally been hospitable to an exceptionally wide range of views and interests and social groups, we shy away from single-issue politics, no matter how important that single issue may be. (5) We are acquainted with many very reasonable and well-intentioned people who have no difficulty in accepting the pro-choice position. Our respect for them sometimes gives us moments of doubt in which we wonder if we may not be mistaken in our anti-abortion conclusion. (This is the "Forty million liberal Democrats can't be wrong" argument.) (6) Now that the abortion cat has been out of the bag for more than a decade, it seems improbable to us that it can ever be captured again. Even if abortion were to be outlawed, the prohibition would be largely unenforceable. The police would be reluctant to arrest, prosecutors reluctant to indict, juries reluctant to convict. So is the fight worth the candle? (7) Since abortion is part and parcel of a very liberal sex ethic (or in some cases a non-ethic), the opponent of abortion logically ought to be an opponent of this ethic as well. But while we can at moments imagine ourselves going to the wall for anti-abortionism, hardly any of us can picture ourselves as champions of chastity.

THESE REASONS explain our lukewarmness, but they don't justify it. Abortion is a great national disgrace, and inasmuch as we anti-abortion Democrats have remained relatively inactive in our opposition to it we are not totally undeserving of blame for what has happened.

So what are we to do? At a minimum we ought to organize either a caucus within the Democratic party or a special-interest group (if I may be forgiven for using that expression) on the periphery of the party. But not just any old group or caucus will do. While we remember that we are against abortion, we can't forget that we are mainstream Democrats as well. There must be no single-issue fanaticism about us; whatever alliances we are able to work out with conservatives on the abortion question, there must be no generalized cozying up to them; the case against abortion must be made publicly in dry, sober, intellectual terms, not in purple rhetoric, and not

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even when the pro-choice forces provoke us by lapsing into their coat-hanger rhetoric; no promises must be made that eventual repeal of abortion-on-demand will result in any striking decline in the number of abortions performed in the United States; the most that will be accomplished is the removal of what is in effect the moral sanction the courts have given abortion.

Lest my argument sound too much like an appeal to duty only — and duty, while infinitely admirable, has never been an especially pleasant goddess — let me sweeten the cup with an appeal to Democratic self-interest as well.

The pro-abortion stance of the national Democratic party coupled with the anti-abortion stance of the Republican party helps the Republicans in at least two ways, In the short run, their anti-abortionism serves as a kind of moral fig leaf for the Reagan administration's belligerence abroad, its indifference to problems of social justice both at home and abroad, and its general attitude that betokens anything but a "pro-life" orientation toward the world. Americans with strong anti-abortion convictions are disposed to overlook many of the administration's moral shortcomings when they realize that only the Republicans, not the national Democrats, echo their anti-abortion convictions.

In the longer run, traditional Democratic families — especially those whose religion is Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish — are being lost to the party on the abortion issue. There are other pressures, to be sure, tending to separate them from their customary political loyalties, especially pressures resulting from upward mobility and geographic change. But add to these the fact that they have no place to go except to the Republicans with their anti-abortion sentiments, and we lose these families sooner than we had to or in many cases when we didn't have to lose them at all.

One of the fundamental principles of politics in a democracy is not to be too insistent on fundamental principles. I have scant sympathy with the person who views political activity as a sacred mission, a kind of ersatz religion. If it's religion he wants, let him go to church. Pragmatism, not salvation, is the name of the political game. Yet there are moments in the national life when the soul of the nation is at stake. Abortion makes the present such a moment in the life of the United States. If it is perverse to seek personal salvation in politics, it is equally perverse to forget that the nation one serves has an abiding need for a kind of political salvation. Abortion is not simply one more objectionable feature in American life. It is nothing less than a great horror — both in itself and as a sign of the deterioration of moral intelligence in our society. In such circumstances even the most pragmatic of anti-abortion Democrats must recognize the need for something of a moratorium on politics as usual.

IMPOVERISHED HAITIANS STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY

Père Cico & the Afè Nèg Combite

M. BASIL PENNINGTON

PERE Cico. I heard the name even before I passed through passport control. Three college men from Tennessee, volunteering their spring break, spoke excitedly of him. As the agent fumbled with my passport, I could see beyond the barrier a smile that I had not yet identified with the priest who has become almost a legend. All I could sense at that moment was that behind that very special smile there was a very special person. The Reverend Occide Cico Jean is a very special person.

Père Cico, as everyone calls him, is thirty-six, a fact his boyish grin belies—broad, infectious, warm—a smile that lights up every bit of that dark face. I immedilately liked this energetic young Haitian. Everyone does. His whole heart is in his face. His compassionate concern, his intent, wholly hospitable listening, his earnestness are all there. Yet it doesn't take long to realize that the lively eyes are also very shrewd and miss little of what is going on around them.

Our plane had been three hours late—some mechanical difficulty. I was disappointed. I had been looking forward to seeing Port-au-Prince and the surrounding mountains as we came in. Now all was dark. We had flown little more than an hour, but had gone back decades. The scene was reminiscent of India: the crowded streets, people scantily clad, roadside shops, outside cooking, crowded little houses with dingy lights, the heat and humidity. We started up into the hills in Father's battered old van. As we climbed, the air cooled and became even chill. The van soon broke down and a jeep had to come to the rescue. The road was narrow and winding; no guardrails stood between us and the sharp descent.

We passed through several villages, but there was little sign of life, though it was only ten o'clock. The poor have little

FATHER M. BASIL PENNINGTON, O.C.S.O., *a monk of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, is the author of numerous works on spirituality. His most recent book,* Monastery, *will be published this month by Harper and Row.*

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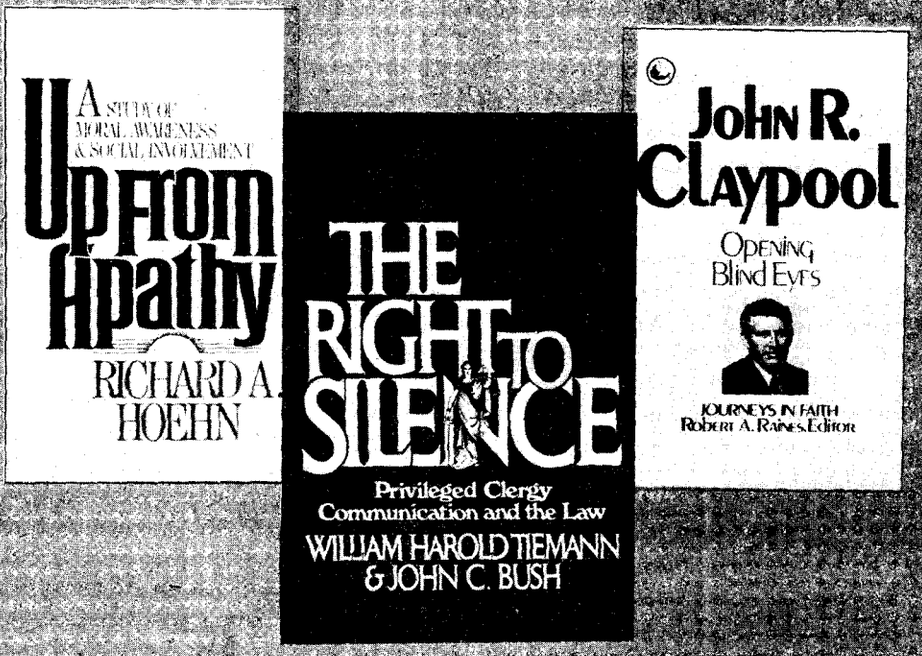
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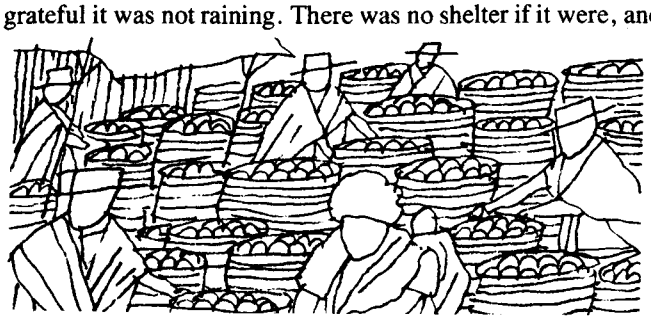
night life; they go to bed soon after the sun. There is little electricity and no money for oil for lamps. As we entered Kenscoff we found the first real signs of life. Welcoming lights shone out from the canteen and the music of the Caribbean made the cool night seem warmer. There were some soldiers about, a few trucks, and many, many women, not a few with children in tow. This was the center of Afe Nèg Combite, an organization founded by Père Cico and his people. I was told Afe Nèg Combite is Creole and means "negroes' togetherness for their problems"—black persons working together to meet their own needs and develop a self-supporting society, a gret ideal in a country where unemployment borders on the universal and capital is almost totally lacking.

The Afe Nèg Combite center embraces many things all clustered around Saint Nicolas church, still in construction. There is the dispensary, the orphanage, the stores—co-ops and outlets for the craft work of the people—a library, a study hall, a hostel for the poor children from the hills allowing them to attend the primary school in the town, the canteen where Père seeks to provide a nourishing meal each day for some three hundred people. Nourishment is one of the keys to the future. One cannot hear God nor man when an empty stomach is growling loudly. No child can attend to lessons when dazed with hunger. Stunted, weakened bodies can do little truly productive work, no matter how willing the spirit might be. Still, it is amazing what the determined spirit, grasping for the very necessities of life, can push the body to do.

We had come to see the "merchants"—mostly, almost exclusively, women. Women of all ages, many with little ones clinging to their skirts or huddled near them, thumb in mouth, wide-eyed. (At 6′4″ I stood as a great white giant in their midst.) The men had stayed at home to tend the gardens with the older children. It was the woman's lot, twice a week, to make the day-long trek to Kenscoff to sell the produce at the market. Many of the women had walked as much as eight hours, some twelve. We helped one elderly woman lower the enormous bundle from off her head (that is the way they carried produce). It weighed all of sixty pounds, more than half her own weight. I inquired how much she might hope to get for it in the morrow's market. Three or four dollars, if she were lucky and a good bargainer. Then back up into the hills for more work, to gather another bundle and come down again on Thursday.

Before Père Cico came to Kenscoff three years ago, these merchants, as many as eight hundred of them, would spend the night in the village square, huddling together against the chill, grateful it was not raining. There was no shelter if it were, and the market would be poor. Now there was Afe Nèg Combite's "dormitory" and when that got full, their canteen. There was little difference between these two buildings: long, narrow cement slabs with a tin roof overhead and slated or adobed walls. At the end of the canteen were some primitive facilities, at the end of the "dormitory" a more primitive kitchen. Fifteen cents (they could afford no more) bought the patrons a supper of rice, cornmeal, or wheat, with beans; an unmarked place to sleep on the floor; and a breakfast that repeated the supper. The nourishment relieved the fatigues of one day's journey and made the return journey possible. When three or four hundred boarders, their children, bundles of vegetables and chickens had filled the floor of the "dormitory," the music and dancing in the canteen stopped and it too became a dormitory. The women huddled together for warmth as the temperature dropped to fifty.



As we moved among the women, great curious eyes looked up. When they saw Père Cico they became suffused with joy. When he told the women we were his and their friends, there to help them, they smiled and clapped. But the little ones did not gather round, and grasp my fingers, hands, and arms as they did in the schools. Their little bodies were too tired from the long day's walk.

We had come to the mountains that Monday night to see the merchants, to get acquainted with Afe Nèg Combite, to hear the heart of Père Cico—the heart of the reviving church of Haiti. John Paul II had been there the week before. I asked Père Cico if the pope's visit had had much impact. "It shook the nation to its depths," was his reply. Will it produce any lasting change? Time will tell. Père Cico will be a part of that change, of that we can be sure. And perhaps a very great part of it. For one of the concessions Jean-Claude Duvalier, the president-for-life, granted was to return to the pope the freedom to name the men of his own choice to the seven bishoprics of Haiti. Now, a priest of the people like the popular and gifted Père Cico can be called forth to lead them.

He is well-prepared. After theological studies and ordination ten years ago, he spent seven years at the university. He earned degrees in sociology and anthropology. For the last three years he has been animating his people to new collaborative efforts. At first he was harassed, feared as a Communist, but his simplicity and openness, his love and self-gift, have succeeded in disarming most suspicions. So far, Afe Nèg Combite takes no political positions. The people function quietly but effectively to raise themselves from the borders of starvation and to make it possible for at least some of the more promising to begin getting some education. Starting from virtually nothing they have made some progress materially, much more spiritually, achieving a new sense of human and Christian dignity. For the moment they depend greatly on outside help, especially from the United States. Their contact here is Food for the Poor (1301 Copans Road, Pompano Beach, Florida 33064). But they do not want to build a dependent organization; they want to help each other help themselves. And for the moment Père Cico is their young and effective father.

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COLD COMFORT

FROM 'BODY HEAT' TO 'BIG CHILL'

SHORTLY BEFORE I saw *The Big Chill*, I felt it. I returned from a trip to find a message on my answering machine that a friend from college had died. This was a shock, though not exactly a surprise, for the friend had been a hard liver, an alcoholic. Attending the memorial service was like being old owl eyes at the funeral of J. Gatsby. Many people who were there I had scarcely seen in ten years. The most eloquent among us gave a eulogy. Afterwards, we all went over to our friend's favorite bar on First Avenue and had a few drinks. We caught up on each other's news as if it were important, though most of us will never see each other again. The "chill" had come for me as soon as I got the message off my machine. I recognized that I had crossed a watershed in my own life. There have been previous occasions when a friend from high school or college, someone my own age, had died. But in the past my reaction has always been, "Taken before his time." This time was different. My friend had not left behind a lot of unrealized hopes. Nobody still had expectations of him that must now be regretted. He had died of old age.

The Big Chill begins on a similar note, if not a sympathetic one. It is the first note of "You Can't Always Get What You Want," a song that the Rolling Stones recorded in the sixties. At the funeral of Alex, who has killed himself, his old college classmate Karen (Jobeth Williams) plays this tune. Another classmate, Howard (Kevin Kline), has gone completely to pieces delivering the eulogy, so the funeral has been somewhat grim. But by the time the class reunion follows the coffin outside, Jagger and the rest of the Stones have kicked in with the original version of the song. The beat is picking up. Despite the somber occasion that brings these seven people together again, the atmosphere is far from elegaic. During the weekend that everyone spends as house guests of Harold and his wife Sarah (Glenn Close), director-writer Lawrence Kasdan keeps things lively. He and co-scriptwriter Barbara Benedek never let the conversation get mawkish for more than a few seconds.

Look at the way the mood changes, and then quickly changes back again, while everybody sits around drinking the night after the funeral. Michael (Jeff Goldblum) is explaining the only editorial rule at *People* magazine, where he works. "You can't write anything longer than the average person can read during the average crap," he says. Harold points out that, "People read Dostoyevsky in the can." "Yeah, but they can't finish it," Michael laments. This is the kind of snappy

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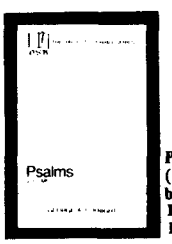

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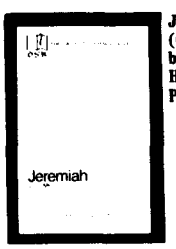

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dialogue Kasdan did so well in *Body Heat*. But now spirits flag as Sarah is overwhelmed by memories, and Sam (Tom Berenger), who stars in a television series, bemoans the falseness of friends he has made since college in show biz. "I'd forgotten what this is like," he says, looking around at present company. "In L.A., I don't know who to trust. . . . I don't know what people think of me. Or why they like me, or even *if* they like me." After a pause, Harold replies, "You don't have that problem here. You *know* I don't like you." "Me neither," says Michael. "Ditto," adds Meg (Mary Kay Place). Whatever self-pity or reflectiveness was about to creep in, it has had the ground cut from under it before we can take it seriously.

Although Kasdan only came to prominence a few years ago, he has already shown considerable range as a filmmaker. His script credits extend from sci-fi epic like *The Empire Strikes Back* to romantic comedy like *Continental Divide*. His previous effort as a director, *Body Heat*, is a classy *film noir; The Big Chill* runs more to melodrama and deft farce. He handles all genres equally well. He is a man of many parts. In this movie, he has divided himself up into four of them and chased himself around the screen. At one point Harold, who tries to get the others to go jogging with him every morning, buys running shoes for each of his guests. Everybody needs them, for the movie is a fast track. It's inevitable with eight central characters—in addition to the seven former classmates, there's the dead Alex's girlfriend, Chloe (Meg Tilly)—that the pace is brisk. This is why the mood changes constantly. The autumn weekend these people are passing together is like one we might spend playing a board game. It's entertaining in the same way. After each scene, the dice are rolled and a new combination of characters comes up. The action moves to a new set of squares for a few minutes. The result is fun, superficial, relaxing.

Despite the film's ebullience, however, I think that in it Kasdan is really worrying a bit about his own success. All the different roles are his and Ms. Benedek's conflicted selves; they are embodiments of old cynicisms and new self-doubts. It is this faint undertone of misgiving that gives the movie's bright spots and high points their bite. If the brightness comes from the sparks that jump between characters who make contact again during the weekend, the darker implications seem to lie in the parallels that exist elsewhere, between those characters who do not have heart-to-heart talks with one another.

Sarah and Meg talk a good deal, for instance, particularly about the latter's desire to have a child even though she has no husband. Sarah is so generous and understanding that she arranges for her own husband to serve as stud, which prompts Meg to make to him the movie's best remark: "I feel like I just got a great deal on a used car." Yet it is Meg and Karen who bear more interesting relationship to each other, even if they hardly exchange two words. Meg is unhappy because she can't get a man or have a family to raise; Karen is unhappy because she has the very things Meg feels the lack of. No matter which way you have it, things don't seem to work out. That's the nagging doubt at the back of Kasdan's mind he makes with

Fire

Fire, most beautiful of flowers,
Whose only perfume is brightness,
You have no season, and you bloom
On the highest of high altars
And under the vagrant's pot.
Through centuries on centuries
Like Christ you are everywhere,
To kindle the half cigarettes
Which the homeless find in the gutters,
And the tall paschal candle.

Wartime Sunday

In honor of Eugene Atget, photographer of Paris.

From the time of a long-ago war that destroyed only
far-away cities
I remember a Sunday walk with the littlest of our sons.
The vomit of Saturday night was wet in the doorways,
No one was up, First Avenue empty and gray,
So we turned a corner to stare at the three bridges,
Great webs of stillness over the East River.

On our way home, passing the locked-up shops
We saw one window heaped with tarnished lamps,
Guitars and radios and dusty furs,
And there among them a pawned christening-dress
White as a waterfall.

The Vendanger

Because it blooms exactly at the season
When grapes are ripe for wine,
In France this small white aster
Is called the harvester.
And now from every casual patch of weeds
And all along the roads' rough borders
Its thronging delicate
Dusty constellations
Call out to us, that he is close at hand
Who lets himself be gathered
To be our wine and bread,
Mixing our fearful sorrows with his own
Till they are happiness.

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POEMS by Anne Porter

Red Sky at Night

At about five o'clock in the evening on the 7th of December
There was at first an ordinary sunset,
But after sundown there bled into the sky
Such an immense flood of dusky red-gold fire
That every house, barn, shed, tree, twig and blade of grass
And every worker bound for home
Was drenched in it and glowing.
Even when night had fallen
There lingered a long band of smoldering dark glory
Over the far horizon hedged with soot-black trees.

They say it was something like that on one September night
When the six-winged Seraph
Printed the little poor man with the wounds of Christ.
The sky was set aflame over Mount Alverna
Shining into the windows of the inns
For miles around
So that the muleteers woke and saddled and loaded their beasts
And thinking it was dawn
Continued on their journey towards Romagna.
Only when they had gone some distance did the night come back,
And after that, they saw the real sun rising.

Cause of Our Joy

1.

Rock crystal
Clearer than crystal
Stronger than rock

Snow-crown of Sinai
Melting on the heights
Pouring through the valleys
In pure rushing water
And wine that sings of justice.

2.

Chosen from the chosen
Mystical rose
Your creature petals
Mirror that beauty
No one can see and live
You hide in your heart
Like dew simple and silent
That blazing majesty.

Small as you are, your fragrance
Fills all the world,
Fragrance of hope,
Fragrance of the gospels.

Come to the old woman
Whose lodging is the street
Come to the drugged boy
The landlord, the general
Come to the hunted hunter by his jungle river
Come to the banker, the prisoner, the torturer
The hungry, the shut-in, the runaway in danger
Come to the backward child.

Whether or not we know you
Come to rich and poor
Come to us all.

3.

Star of morning
There is still such darkness
Only by the light
Of your innocent fire
We know this is the morning.

But sweet in this dark morning
Is a freshness of new bread
And the newborn Word in his cradle
Is just beginning to stir.

Queen of Angels
You're up early
Washing, baking, sweeping,
Young country girl
From a scorned province

Broken for the broken

Wife of a carpenter
Mother of a convict
Cause of our joy.

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the jokes in scene after scene.

Sarah and Chloe are complementary personalities too, and have certain crucial experiences in common. And the parallels among the men are equally sharp, acrid. Michael, the wittiest but least well liked of the group, tries without success to get women to sleep with him. Nick (William Hurt), the most abrasive but also most attractive man, has been rendered impotent in Vietnam. Yet he gets the woman Michael has spent the whole weekend trying to score with. Etc. The group that gathers after Alex's funeral is a fairly even mix of malcontents and over-achievers. They're all charming, all likeable in their fashion. There is no way to choose among them. Nothing is resolved about their relationships by the film's end. Kasdan's own ambivalences remain intact. With this movie I think Kasdan is just trying to keep certain options alive within himself; yet at the same time, he fears that some best self within him has already died. When I and the others at my friend's funeral went to that bar afterwards, there was a lot of banter. But the joking had a raspy edge to it. We were half musing on ourselves, and half brooding. So is Kasdan. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Books: PILGRIMAGE TO COMPASSION

THE CONTEMPORARY SPATE of "spirituality" books which continue the vogue in booktrade houses seems to have unwittingly eclipsed the multi-faceted Merton talent. Packaging and marketing of Merton re-editions witness his undeniable "staying-power." All the more reason to herald the advent of a hidden (indeed muted) but essential Merton, the littérateur.

A decade's accumulated literary criticism comprises the focus of Patrick Hart's book. Merton's earliest book reviewing and theoretical essays from the thirties and forties are also represented here. The latter provides an interpretive key. The dominant New Criticism signaled the insurgency for Merton's own instincts for the aesthetic: form is a more profound communicator than message. Despite the subsequent abuse by practitioners of the new literary critical orthodoxy, Merton never overspent his inheritance of its currency. How revealing to read his first review of John Crowe Ransom's *The World's Body* with its protest against a "poetry of Ideas" and romanticism. The definition of poetry Merton found there fit his own enterprise like a glove: "It is a kind of knowledge, and a knowledge that cannot be gained by any other means, for the poet is concerned with the aspects of experience that can never be well described but only reproduced or imitated."

But let us go to the heart of the matter. It would be redundant for reviewers of Merton to remark how unsystematic his writing remains. This happened, in part,

THE LITERARY ESSAYS OF THOMAS MERTON

EDITED BY BROTHER PATRICK HART

New Directions, $39.95, 549 pp.

THOMAS MERTON'S DARK PATH

THE INNER EXPERIENCE OF A CONTEMPLATIVE

William H. Shannon

Farrar Straus & Giroux $12.95, 245 pp.

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Anthony T. Padovano

Doubleday, $13.95, 193 pp.

George Kilcourse

because of the man's extraordinary but scattered enthusiasms. He was, undoubtedly, the essayist and not a sustained commentator. Nowhere will one find a better evidence than in the one hundred and twenty-one pages of his literary critical study of Albert Camus, collected for the first time in Hart's volume. Each of seven essays is independent. And yet cumulatively they build perhaps Merton's most penetrating critical exercise, at the same time both literary and spiritual.

The unrelenting question Merton's reader ponders: what *method* generates these artful spiritual renderings? The closest he comes to a definition is to coin a new term, the "sapiential" rather than "religious" which he is wary to tag on every profound work of art. "I would submit that the term 'religious' no longer conveys the idea of an imaginative awareness of basic meaning," Merton offers in one of several lucid essays on Faulkner.

Merton's most intense panegyric on the freedom of the literary imagination comes in his 1964 "Message to Poets" gathered in Mexico City. The introductions to Latin American poets he translated converge with this declaration marking the secret solidarity of artists, removed from politics and other totalitarian threats. "It is in this sense that we are all monks," Merton insists.

And so the parade of kindred spirits, fellow monks: Pasternak, Blake, Joyce, Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Simone Weil, William Melvin Kelly, Louis Zukofsky, Camus, and those newly discovered third world voices, all are embraced. I find the earliest sustained study, Pasternak, pivotal. The existential chords begin to resonate. Merton insists that *Doctor Zhivago* is nowise a "political" undertaking. "The protest of *Doctor Zhivago* is spiritual . . . religious, aesthetic and mystical." While he finds no Christian "message" to distill in Pasternak, the work is essentially Christian without familiar orthodoxies. The true revolutionary, Merton says, is not militant but the one who brings to light reality's most painful conflicts: dehumanization vs. the humanity affirmed by the Christ-event.

With Camus the insight matures. Merton hears sympathetically Camus's typically "post-Christian" voice. His refusal

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of institutional Christianity grows from the humiliating images of the human as a "caricature," which Merton contends cannot be blamed on Camus but on Christians themselves. Such a distortion of grace by appeals justifying a God of arbitrary tyranny Merton attributes to the embalming of Christian values and virtue by social institutions. Hence, the themes of estrangement and alienation intersect the rhythm of solitude and solidarity to capture Merton's monastic attention. There are here some of the most intriguing literary-critical applications of a re-thought theology of grace readers will find. Moreover, the failure of a bourgeois ethic is juxtaposed with Marxism. In *The Rebel* Merton sees the choice between bourgeois Christianity and Marxism as equally alienating.

There is so much presented in this collection of Merton's thought that one might be reluctant to quarrel over an omission. But since so many occasional Merton interests find a place in this volume, I wish that some of the taped lectures on Rainer Maria Rilke had been transcribed and included. (Two Faulkner lectures achieve this status because of previous transcriptions for *Katallagete*.) Perhaps later editions will see the value of Merton's debt to Rilke and his important critical study of that poet's technique of "in-seeing."

William H. Shannon ably serves readers with his guidebook to Thomas Merton's spirituality. Since few Catholic writers evidence so publicly the transformation from naive dogmatism to post-conciliar pluralism and the experiential as a locus for theology, this survey of Merton's developing thought on contemplation proves especially helpful.

An event subsequent to the publication of this book ought to send readers to its pages repeatedly. The nucleus of Merton's mature mysticism, a 1959 manuscript entitled *The Inner Experience*, is being published serially in eight parts beginning with the 1983 numbers of *Cistercian Studies*. The embargoed text, heretofore available only to scholars,is not only generously quoted in a chapter of selected excerpts by Shannon; his book offers a background and commentary the *The Inner Experience*, a "spin-off" of the booklet, *What Is Contemplation?* written a decade earlier.

What too many readers of Merton expect is a genre of theological reflection foreign to his intentions. Shannon profiles Merton as a pre-eminently mystical theologian. Here is the heart of the study. Mystagogy occupies Merton's attention. He steers wide of the kataphatic tradition of theology that arrives at an understanding of God by way of affirmation. Rather than the way of direct analogy, Merton preferred the negation and paradox of apophatic theology: the contemplative renounces the concepts, symbols of mind's activity for the "dark" way of "knowing" God as "unknown." Here is the chaste Catholic intellect of Merton qua mystic. Faith for Merton is not purely intellectual; faith is "this dark loving knowledge" in the tradition of John of the Cross. Shannon has penetrated Merton's lexicon and bridges the chasm between devotional tracts and the finely tuned later Merton essays.

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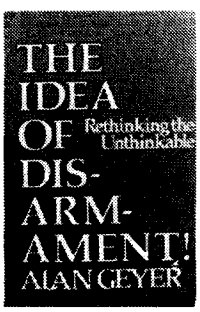

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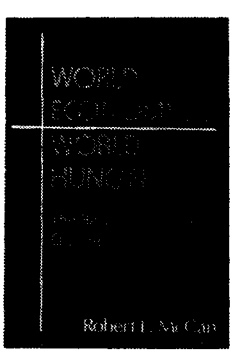

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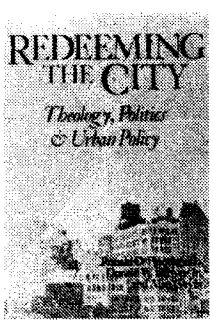

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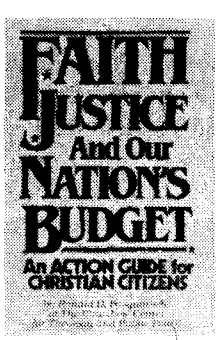

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The familiar landmarks appear fresh from Shannon's guiding scrutiny and insight. He bears out my suspicions: *The Ascent to Truth* (1951) offered a hopeless rendition of John of the Cross in scholastic terms Merton abandoned thereafter; *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1962) incorporates the "new theology" of person and existentialism, thereby leaving behind the definitions of the version thirteen years earlier in favor of a "book on personal prayer"; *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* (1969) remains what it was originally intended, "a book for monks" and not a lay person's blueprint for sanctity.

As in no previous Merton study, Shannon's book integrates themes of Merton's writings with the overarching quest for contemplation. Meditation is the discovery of "Who I am" and "God as He is." So the contemplative's "mission" in the world is to "keep alive a sense of sin." Merton's caveat is tracked through *The Inner Experience*. In our age, guilt has replaced sin. Sin connotes a sense of "ontological fault," not a matter of moral behavior. The illusory, false self, the legacy of the Cartesian ego, must be unmasked.

Shannon likewise steers directly into the problematical subject of Merton's "elitist" view of contemplation. Admitting soberly that the Cistercian monk "never seemed to abandon it," he reconstructs a sense of the communal ministry of the contemplative. A concluding chapter on *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* and the Asian trip brings us to appreciate the growing influence of Zen on his life and study. Without doctrines or forms, Zen confirmed Merton's dark way of contemplative knowing. The contemplative life transcended all philosophical and theological systems, all creedal statements. Dissolving the ego-self makes way for the real self's transcendent experience.

One final note. Shannon has volunteered that he has a less than satisfactory grasp of the role of Merton's poetry in his corpus. I sugest that he has laid the foundations for a deeper appreciation of irony and paradox as figures of speech undergirding Merton's apophatic metaphors.

One closes the covers of Anthony Padovano's brisk story of Thomas Merton's "pilgrimage to compassion" with the conviction that here, finally, is an *interpretive* study of this enigmatic monk. No need to brace for the parade of familiar prose excerpts writers have been quilting into Merton "studies." Here is an intelligent, stimulating attempt to measure Merton's stature. And Padovano's gifts as literary critic and theologian equip him as an American cultural critic who rewards readers generously.

The style of this book is engaging. In the form of a narrative using the present tense, Padovano's retelling of Merton's life emerges as a critical biography. From cradle to coffin, it is chronicled. Padovano's gift for locating a context for Merton's self-discoveries is winning. Merton's autobiographical bent is set within the tradition of Puritan conventions and American literature: "the search for a self . . . a public search, one that a convert was obliged to share with others."

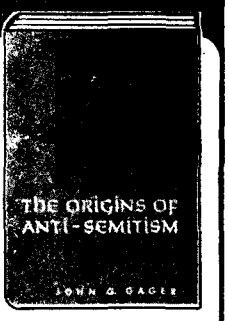
He ventures even more provocative analysis of the "convert syndrome" that initially seized Merton. The domesticated Merton of the 1940s and 1950s, nostalgically still venerated by Roman Catholic pietists and triumphalists, is definitively dismantled. Blind obedience as a motive for Merton's early embrace of institutional Catholicism would not survive his deeper inner convictions. The man's mind was dialectical, not dogmatic. Padovano does not spare the early works of Merton: "narrow"; "arrogant"; "sentimental Christology."

Padovano proffers a compelling study of the centrality of the man's poetic gifts for his spirituality. "His prose never registered the changes as radically as did his poetry," Padovano judges. It was, he suggests, "the barometer of his soul." Analyses of Merton's maturing poetic skills occupy a pivotal role. One finds vectors to approach the meaning of an enormous neglected poetry corpus. Moreover, there is the convergence of the religious and literary in a mythic consciousness so dominant in a work like Merton's *The Geography of Lograire* which earns the ranking of "great" from Padovano. His explication of the themes of fraternity and loneliness at the heart of the poem are invaluable keys. He serves readers with an equally engaging analysis of the biographically important, posthumously published novel. *My Argument with the Gestapo*.

One major flaw in the book revolves around Padovano's insistence that Merton's abuse and manipulation by the monastic authorities should have occasioned his departure. While he acknowledges the discipline monastic life contributed to the anarchic, indulgent young Merton, like biographer Monica Furlong he misses the positive effects of Cistercian communal life. It will surely remain for a monastic writer to ferret out and communicate this dimension.

The analogy with John Henry Newman in the nineteenth century is strained. Psychologizing about the guilt over his relationship with younger brother, John Paul, and the early death of parents proves helpful to a point. But like the discussion of Merton's relationship with women ("He renounced marriage and regretted the surrender") it becomes tedious and arbitrary.

How Deeply Rooted in Western Culture is Anti-Semitism?



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In all, Anthony Padovano coaxes serious readers into a reverence for Merton's complexity: a vulnerable, unconventional man, distrusting the status quo of our institutions. The 1960s were Merton's arena. The mapping of his journey through the decade traces an extraordinary legacy of cultural transition. The Abbey of Gethsemani's famous monk would surely find it immodest to dub him the symbol of a "decade," let alone symbol of a century! Better to sum up Merton's life in the sublime observation where Padovano begins: "The tentative steps led to few certainties. . . . There was always another side to the mountain. The only mountain that conquered him was the one that had no more faces, no new sides, no further summits."

In brief

THE PRESENCE OF GRACE AND OTHER BOOK REVIEWS BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR, *Compiled by Leo J. Zuber, edited by Carter W. Martin, University of Georgia Press, $16, 189 pp.*

This is a splendid collection of 120 brief book reviews by Flannery O'Connor. They appeared in *The Bulletin*, O'Connor's local diocesan paper, between 1956 and 1964. O'Connor took seriously the intellectual content of her faith, and took it where it was least likely to be found. For her, writes Carter W. Martin in his introduction, reviewing was "an obligation, a serious part of her life within the church."

The reviews are models of brevity (about two-hundred words each). Of unflinching clarity and laced with levity, they are both sterling and searing. No fast-food syndrome here; only solid bread and marching rations.

The range is broad: literature, philosophy, criticism. The subject matter is invariably theological. Of a collection of stories published in the Catholic press O'Connor noted that "sin is [here] con-

REVIEWERS

GEORGE KILCOURSE *teaches theology at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky.*

PATRICK JORDAN *was formerly one of the editors of* The Catholic Worker *in New York.*

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spicuous by its absence." Of a so-called Catholic novel: "In fiction there is nothing worse than the combination of slickness and Catholicism."

The theologians reviewed are all first-rate: Barth, Guardini, Adam, von Hügel, Congar, Chardin, Bouyer, de Lubac—a hall of fame for the out-of-print. O'Connor wished the church had a reverse Index—to *require* certain books to be read. She evidenced a special interest for biblical criticism. Her orthodoxy runs so deep one senses the freedom and presence of divine-like judgment.

This collection is guaranteed to provoke belly laughs, widen eyeballs, and prolong reflection. PATRICK JORDAN

Correspondence

(Continued from page 610)

idea before the NCCB in the very near future. If such an endeavor were only to produce the amount of discussion as has their "Peace Pastoral," it would be a project well worth the effort.

(REV.) JOSEPH G. SEXTON

Defining public good

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I would like to commend John A. Coleman's essay "The Christian as Citizen" [Sept. 9] for its clear articulation of the crucial importance of the moral-cultural system of democratic capitalism, especially of the churches and other mediating institutions. Left only to its political system and its economic system, democratic capitalism is doomed to self-destruction. Its genius, not only in the hands of Tocqueville but also in those of Jefferson, Madison, Lincoln, and others, is to pivot itself ultimately upon the institutions and habits of sound morals, true religion, and vigorous intellectual life. Indeed, the great contemporary weakness of democratic capitalism lies in its moral-cultural system. This is a hopeful sign. For that system lies most within our power to change; and, through it, to change the economic and the political system as the public good demands.

I should add, perhaps, one observation. In a pluralist society, who defines "the public good"? It is true that each of us does, and each seeks it, according to his or her own lights. Yet it is in the very nature of a pluralist society that there are *many* concepts of the public good, in competition with one another. As Madison wisely foresaw in *Federalist Ten*, moreover, this circumstance is the very condition for the maintenance of the public good, protecting it from any self-proclaimed moral majority. On this point, Madison adds a practical depth to the wisdom of Tocqueville.

MICHAEL NOVAK

Agape, eros, & Bowie

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: Congratulations on Ms. D. E. Finn's review of David Bowie's "Let's Dance" [Sept. 9]. By avoiding the fashion and fan magazine prose found in even the better periodicals, Ms. Finn managed to spotlight what Mr. Bowie has to say, whether or not he is successful in making his point. However, Ms. Finn herself has successfully pinpointed Mr. Bowie's fixation with agape and eros in our age.

While the stodgy warn against taking popular culture too seriously, there certainly is the danger of ignoring its more articulate voices. Again, my congratulations. D. ANDREW AUSTIN

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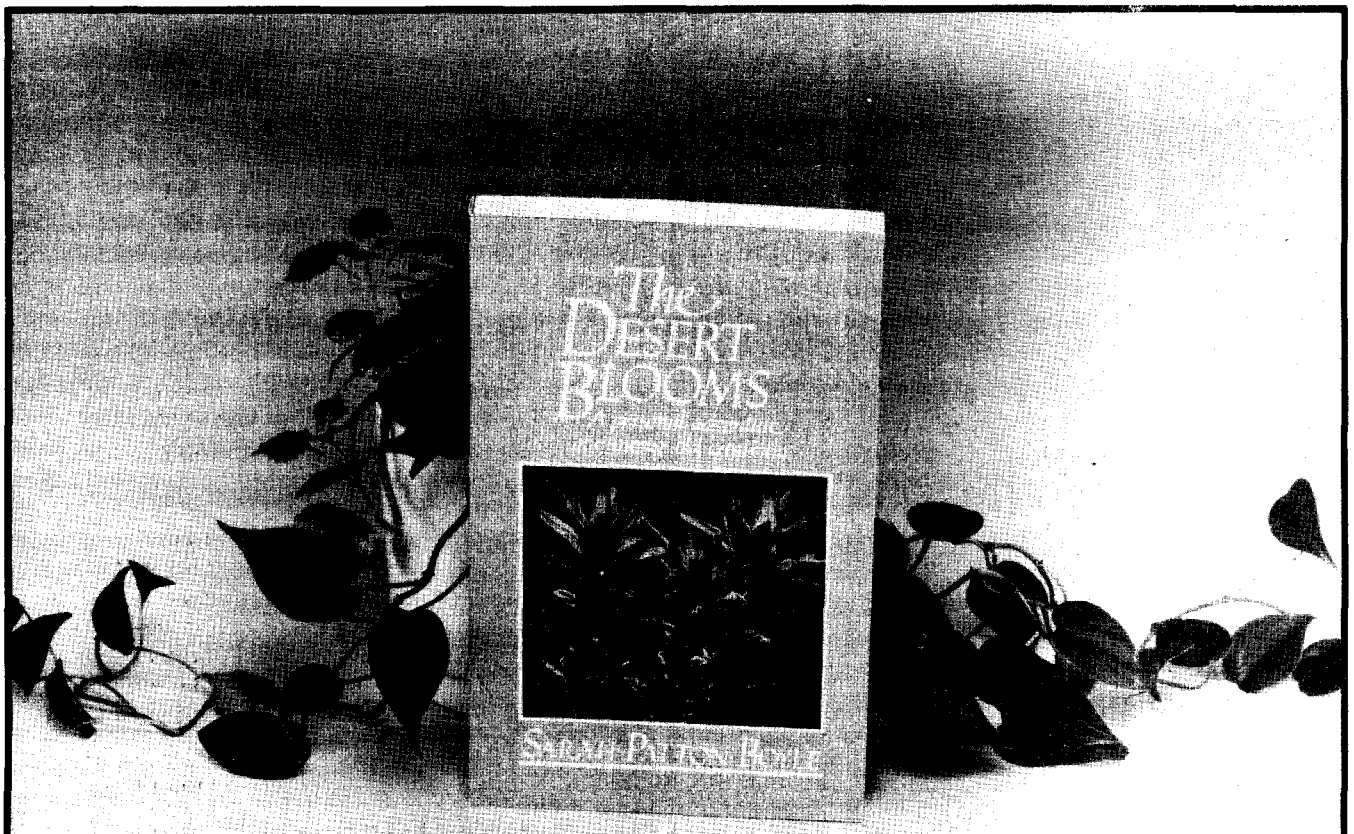

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